

PLAY



The UK's bestselling independent gaming magazine

SHOCK VERDICT

Killzone 3

The definitive review

Dragon Age II

New details unleashed

Duke Nukem Forever

Developer drops insider info

ISSUE NO **202**
THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

DEUS EX

HUMAN REVOLUTION

The future of shooters has arrived

PREVIEW UNCHARTED 3

The latest details and gossip on Sony's killer exclusive

REVIEW MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3

Has *Street Fighter IV* finally met its match?

PREVIEW TOMB RAIDER TRILOGY

Crystal Dynamics tells us what it really thinks of its project

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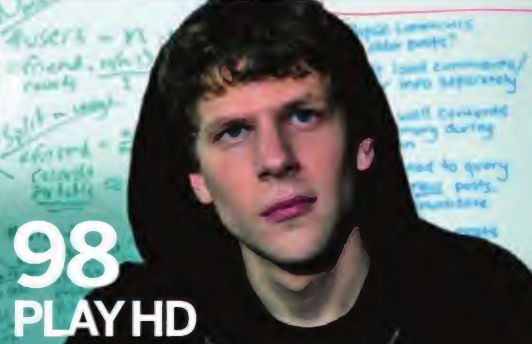
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Watch all the latest PSP trailers on your PSP!

PlayStation 3 PSN PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

FPS: Combat Evolved



It was almost 10 years ago when I first played *Deus Ex* and the memories of it still burn strong. The grim cyberpunk style. The shady look of Liberty Island. The pointless swimming augmentations. "Wow, this is awesome!" I thought, my penchant for dazzling wordplay slicing a reader's mind into quivering ribbons clearly yet to be formed.

Gearbox has kicked Duke Nukem Forever into a healthy shape

Since being blinded with *Deus Ex*'s smart mix of free-form gameplay with immediate FPS thrills, the genre has focused on the latter. Does *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* have what it takes to bring sexy back to the smart shooter? Our exclusive hands-on with the PlayStation 3 version has the answer.

While I'm gibbering on about old games, I also remember playing *Duke Nukem 3D* on my Sega Saturn (RIP), so it's good to see Gearbox has kicked *Duke Nukem Forever* into a healthy shape, and they seem to 'get' it. See

what Gearbox CEO Randy Pitchford had to say to us about bringing back the Duke and the 'pussification' of modern gaming heroes.

It's not all about wistful looks at the past, though, as *Killzone 3* checks in for review. Go on. Have a read. Disappointed? Shocked? Expected? Surprised? Not bothered? When you finally get your hands on the game, let us know what you think. Same goes for *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* but I will beat anyone who challenges me at that game. That's a **Play** promise, right there.

We'll also be introducing more features into **Play**, which kicks off this month with PS3 taking on 360, developer

quotes catching up with them, look at Batman villains, review round-up of every Move game, scientific analysis of what stimulants help you become a gaming god (or just better) and *Silent Hill* retrospective. So get stuck in, I'm off to dig out my old copy of *Deus Ex* and pump up those incredibly useful swimming stats...

Enjoy.

R. King

Editor

contributors



Ashley Day

We keep telling Ashley that his review of *Hyperdimension Neptunia* was good but he reacts in ways that show disbelief. He'll go "oh..." and then carry on talking

about whatever it is he's talking about, or he'll do that thing where he stares at you, waiting for you to start laughing and go "only kidding!" So we're going to tell him his review sucked. Yeah. That'll learn him.



Ben Biggs

To summarise one of Ben's recent nights out... goes to a place called Champions, someone gets their arm pulled behind their back, friend gets into a fight, calls

someone a word we can't reprint, bike gets nicked, goes to another pub, laptop gets stolen, friend gets beaten up again, spends night in A&E. That's paraphrasing but still, there's a place called Champions! Wow!



Chris McMahon

As he's not here right now, we could make anything up and he won't know until right now. Because he's reading this at the same time as you. If

we put something rude, he'll say, "why did you put that about me" in a voice that's supposed to sound strong but sounds slightly hurt. Awww. Maybe we won't put anything rude. Chris is alright. Sometimes.

the PLAY promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like when you play it. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit.

So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh - we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

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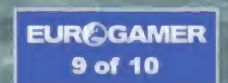
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RE:PLAY



The only magazine in the world where Ben Affleck shares a page with 102 Dalmatians: Puppies To The Rescue



This month's letters answered by:
Chris McMahon
'Positive Thinking'

I've been writing about videogames for more than two years, and I've read many letters from disabled readers, criminals, the underprivileged and more who have all extolled the virtues of our favourite pastime, praising videogames' ability to help overcome the negative aspects of our lives. A producer from Lorraine Kelly's morning show recently sent an email looking for contributors for a section about videogame addiction – we doubt they would have bothered talking to any people who have something good to say about the social and therapeutic aspects of videogames. Hopefully as time goes on, the positive stories like those in our star letter get as much coverage as the negative ones.

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Rehabili-PlayStation

As an avid PS3 gamer and regular reader of your mag, I feel more than qualified to reply to the letter by Richard Solomon who wrote from HMP Full Sutton in issue 199. I am a serving Prison Officer of numerous years and I wish to raise some important points.

Game consoles in prison can have beneficial effects on the prison community. I've noticed improvements in prisoners with poor social skills being able to interact more freely with others. Consoles can provide a valuable outlet to these prisoners who struggle to cope with daily life by providing conversation and giving them other avenues to channel their anger, frustration, and in general make the time go quicker.

Prisoners can only have a PlayStation in their cell if they are on the highest incentive

level (achieved by a constant display of positive behaviour and participating in rehabilitation) so the *do* give prisoners something to aim for and improve their overall well-being.

There can be a negative side though. The acquisition of a gaming console can detract from the vital rehabilitation work needed for some prisoners to progress. We all know how addictive these games can be, and how hours can suddenly blaze by in the blink of an eye.

But overall I am fully supportive of prisoners with PlayStations. They really do make prisons a safer place for all, give prisoners a hobby, and like Mr Solomon, who is undertaking various qualifications in order to gain a career in the industry after release, an interest in making a

life for himself, making the public safer as a result.

Consoles really do provide a beneficial social aspect as well as being bloody entertaining!
Anonymous, via email

We think your letter speaks for itself, so there's very little that we need to add. Suffice to say, we hope that videogames' great detractors take note that the medium can be a very powerful positive force in people's lives. Once again, we'll donate your prize to a youth project via the crime reduction charity Nacro.



★ STAR letter

● The PlayStation 2. All joking aside, it really can be a force for good.

Feel the love

I've been reading, with great pleasure, your 200th issue and the 200 greatest PlayStation moments. It made me realise that I have been enjoying the various PlayStation iterations and reading your wonderful mag for the last 15 years (a realisation of both joy at the memories and horror that I have aged so much).

It all made me think of the many wonderful moments that Sony and PlayStation have given me – facing the T-Rex on *Tomb Raider*, the first time the credits rolled on *Metal Gear Solid*, exploring the worlds of Liberty City and Renaissance Florence, scoring the perfect goal on *Pro Evo* (when it was good), smashing a six back over the bowler's head on *Brian Lara Cricket*, wondering at the beauty of *Gran Turismo*, and enjoying the multimedia experience of the PSP on my daily commute, to name just a small handful.

Yet, if it were not for your insightful news stories and detailed reviews, I may have missed these great and unforgettable moments. So thank you for your brilliant magazine and the moments that it has brought me. Here's to another 15 years of fantastic gaming!

James Holden, Sheffield

The magazine wouldn't have made it this far without 15 years of readers like you, James, so we extend our own deepest gratitude to your loyalty over the past 200 issues. Who knows what's coming next? Perhaps *Play* will change form entirely. We predict that in five years *Play* will be beamed directly into your dreams as you sleep. In ten years *Play* will be a swarm of nanobots that enter the body



● Honestly, where's our next-gen 102 Dalmatians reboot? Where? WHERE!?

through the eyes and make you *sense* our opinions on games. In 15 years *Play* will be a floating orb of pure energy, worshipped by all.

Old dogs, new tricks

Not long ago I looked through the collection of PlayStation games I recently purchased, such as *Nightmare Creatures* and *Jersey Devil*, and it got me thinking about the possibility of the respective developers revisiting these games



● 200 issues. Who'd have thunk it? Here's to another 200! Wheyyyy!



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Namco Bandai. For each letter included this month, the sender wins a copy of Test Drive Unlimited 2, which is out on PS3 (£49.99). Age verification is required.

STUPID letter



Erm, here's a picture of Ben Affleck. Enjoy.

"3D this, squirrel nuts!"

I was sat at work pondering the films of Ben Affleck when I had a very radical vision of a game based on the amazing actor. It's the same genre and sandbox gameplay as *GTA*, except you take control of Affleck just after his career rocketed into dog shit. You rise out of the faeces and become the king of Hollywood via violence, crime and brooding like a muppet. Spielberg: "We'll shoot *Jurassic Park 4* in 3D!!" Affleck: "3D this, squirrel nuts!" BOOM! SHOTGUN TO THE FACE. Vin Diesel has two, I want ONE!?!?!
Chris Heslop, via email

Erm... we... well..... what? What is this? Brooding like a muppet? Who on earth broods like a muppet? And why are you calling Spielberg 'squirrel nuts'? How does one 'rocket' into dog shit? And Vin Diesel has two what? And, more to the point, why do you desire just one of whatever these enigmatic items are? Is there a point to this letter, or is it, as it seems, the ravings of a lunatic? We're genuinely frightened, Chris. Genuinely frightened.

and perhaps creating sequels or spin-offs. New IPs are always a welcome addition to the PS3 roster, but I'd like to see some of the lesser-known, but nonetheless brilliant games that the original PlayStation had to offer, re-invigorated. As far as I'm aware games such as *Dino Crisis* fared quite well both commercially and critically. Moreover, many classic puzzle games, such as *Kula World* and *Kurushi*, could do brilliantly with a PSN reboot. What do you think, *Play*?

Adam Byrne, Ireland

F.Y.I.

You said that *The Sands Of Time* was the best and the following two games were lacking in comparison. I find it hard to believe you guys think that way. I found the first one to be the most annoying. **Andrew Straughan, via email**
Well we find you to be most annoying. We never said they were 'lacking in comparison'. Our intended meaning was that neither sequel felt like the same revelation the first game did.

Ratchet & Clank Vs Jak And Daxter. Front Mission Vs Armored Core. Spyro The Dragon Vs Crash Bandicoot. Sly Cooper Vs Assassin's Creed. These crossovers will never happen, but they really should, don't you agree?
Paul Gurney, Bromley No.

I was wondering which game would you buy if you could buy only one title this year?
Jamie Potts, Hereford
Definitely *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. No, wait, *Uncharted 3*. Yes, that's the one. No, hold on! *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. Or maybe *Killzone 3*. Oh, wait! *Portal 2*... that's our definite, final answer. After *LittleBigPlanet 2*... Forget it, this is a stupid question.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



- The rehabilitative abilities of PlayStation 40%
- The Future 20%
- The Past 30%
- Ben Affleck 10%

PLAY
GOPLAY
the forum...



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SUBJECT: FIRST PLAY

Topic: Gran Turismo 5
Is there rocket jumping in GT5?
Gamerphobe

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Lorraine Kelly needs your help! (Honestly)
I was too busy beating an old lady for money to start reading that supermarioex

SUBJECT: PLAY - ASK US HOW!

Topic: I'm the new Play editor. Ask me questions
Do you like circuses?
tedcurly

We think that you would have far more luck with the PlayStation Network puzzle game reboots, but even then they would likely be little more than high-definition do-overs. Bigger games such as *Dino Crisis* or *Nightmare Creatures* are far less likely to get any kind of sequel simply because of the costs that are associated in doing so. The videogame industry is more risk-averse today than it has ever been before, and as such only the biggest and most popular videogames of days gone by are likely to see newer, glossier versions – and even then only after the internet and gaming community has displayed enough interest for that particular product. It's too bad really, as we've been yearning for a next-generation remake of *102 Dalmatians: Puppies To The Rescue* for years now.



We're still accepting drawings of Ian Dransfield (see Re:Play issue 201). Send in your pics now!

Ayane art

My name's Sophie and I'm an aspiring artist. I've attached my rendition of Ayane from *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2*. I would really like to become a games illustrator and was wondering if you have any tips?

Sophie, Ramsgate

Thanks for your beautiful rendition of Ayane, Sophie, which we've printed here for everyone to enjoy. As for tips we can only suggest that you keep drawing and develop a portfolio that you can present to developers in the future. For now, we'd love it if you could draw a picture of our own Ian Dransfield. Check Re:Play in issue 201 for a reference picture. We'll look forward to seeing it!

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- How the PlayStation 2 can be a force for good
- What you think Play will be like in 20 years
- Pitches for a game starring Ben Affleck that actually make sense

NEWS

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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"I think BG&E is for videogames what Blade Runner is for movies – a timeless classic" – Eric Damian-Vernet, associate producer, Beyond Good & Evil remake, p. 13

A PS3 IN YOUR POCKET

Everything you need to know about Sony's Next Generation Portable (aka the NGP)

ONLINE ALL THE TIME Connection-wise the NGP has it all. In-built wireless, Bluetooth and 3G for mobile internet. That means multiplayer gaming will play a big role in the NGP's future.

QUAD POWER The NGP features a quad(four)-core processor estimated to run at about 2GHz. It looks to be a similar processor to the one used by the iPad.

IT'S BIG The NGP in its current form (which we believe is 99 per cent final) is considerably bigger than other handhelds on the market, including the PSP 3000. The NGP is the same width as the PSP, but is 12.6mm longer and 12.1mm taller.

Proud to be portable

It's a good day to be a PlayStation fan, thinks Ian Dransfield



IT'S CERTAINLY QUITE big, isn't it? But you know what? I just think that's a marker for a tremendous sense of value. We knew a few things about the PSP2 thanks to anonymous insider information, but we genuinely didn't know it would be... well, *this*. It's an absolute monster of a handheld (the kind of comment that will bite me in the backside in the near future when technology does that whole 'progressing' thing) and it appears that Sony's entire ethos behind the design of the new system has been 'PUT MORE TECHNOLOGY IN'.

Now, I've heard some argue that this approach won't appeal to the mainstream – and it sure as hell won't appeal to the Low Prices Fairy – but, frankly, I don't care. As far as I'm concerned, Sony couldn't have done much better here. It's the PSP done bigger and better. It might be overkill in some respects – two touchscreens, an OLED

This has the potential to be a very, very good thing for gamers

screen and 3G spring to mind – but far from dampening my spirits, they're exactly the kind of things that get me very, very excited. And to be honest, the 3DS has not managed to tickle my thrill gland at all since its announcement – I wanted something that will feel like I'm holding a muscle car engine in my hands, not a small step up from a handheld I'm already bored of with a technology I'm not even fond of strapped onto it.

No, I wanted MEAT. I wanted POWER. I wanted THE FURY OF A THOUSAND SUNS. And while it is early days, meaning Sony has every chance of knocking everything up before PSP2's release, I think this has the potential to be a very, very good thing for gamers the world over. Ignore the half-gaming machines that are actually phones, discard any notions of whacking in an unproven technology and re-releasing 13-year-old games – pay attention to the piece of kit that will make you proud to play real, deep and worthwhile videogames. Yes, I'm being arrogant, but the PSP2 looks like it'll give me good cause to be arrogant.



MULTITOUCH X 2

Not only is the front OLED screen multitouch (like most modern smartphones), but the NGP also features a back-mounted multitouch pad. That's double the touch-sensitive options to most devices.

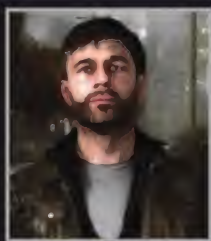
NO XMB Some may lament the loss of the XrossMediaBar (XMB), but this looks to be a multi-page interface, which would suggest you can customise what icons you have on your homepage as well as storing others on additional pages.

Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



Mortal Kombat webisodes inbound

Some of you may have seen a mocked up short of a live-action *Mortal Kombat*. Well, now Warner Bros. has confirmed that director Kevin Tancharoen will be making ten web-hosted shorts. The original clip was a pitch for a *Mortal Kombat* movie.



Heavy Rain movie forecast

Warner is also apparently ramping up production of a *Heavy Rain* adaptation to the big screen. *Deadwood* writer David Milch has been given the duty of boiling down David Cage's 2,000-page script to something more like a movie length. We're interested to see how he does.



PlayStation games on Android

Lost in with the announcement of the PSP2/NGP was Sony's revelation that it would be launching a service that brings PlayStation games to Android phones. The PlayStation Suite will give users of Google's phone interface access to PSN games and classic PSone titles.

OLED SCREEN Organic light emitting diode screens are at the cutting edge of technology. As they don't need a backlight you get much deeper dark colours and higher contrast levels generally. They also consume less power than an LCD screen.

This screen is five inches across, 16:9 ratio, with 960 x 544 resolution and 16 million colours.

BATTERY Whispers around Tokyo when the NGP was announced suggested a battery life of around four to five hours. Sony hasn't officially announced this yet, but that's around the same as the PSP 3000.

CAMERAS The NGP has two cameras; one on the front and one on the back, similar to Nintendo's DSi. This opens up the NGP to a lot more social software and augmented reality games. It also has two microphones.

Sony plans to release the NGP in time for Christmas 2011

PREPARING TO LAUNCH

The big guns confirmed and demoed for the NGP



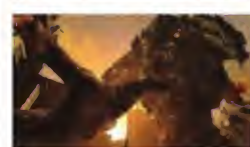
UNCHARTED Being made by Sony Bend, who also developed *Syphon Filter* and *Resistance: Retribution* for PSP.



KILLZONE The premier shooter on the PS3 now on its way to the NGP and its shooter-friendly dual-analogue interface.



WIPEOUT Crisp visuals and Sony's expertise in audio make for the perfect combination for a *Wipeout* game.



RESISTANCE Nihilistic, the team who is bringing us *PlayStation Move Heroes*, have picked up Insomniac's shooter.



LITTLEBIGPLANET No Sony console would be complete these days without Sackboy, but will it link up with *LittleBigPlanet 2*.



HOT SHOTS GOLF Have we ever mentioned how much we love this series? We have? Then you know we're happy.



CALL OF DUTY Likely to be the first truly good handheld version of Activision's military shooter ever. We can't wait to see it.



METAL GEAR SOLID 4 Shown in Tokyo, ported from the PS3 version, but not confirmed as an official project yet.



LOST PLANET Also demoed at the NGP announcement, but Capcom's icy shooter wasn't confirmed for launch either.



YAKUZA 4 Another port from the PS3 and again unconfirmed as a planned release, but does show great deal of promise.



TROPHY SUPPORT Another piece of good news for the hardcore crowd, the NGP clearly displays Trophy support on this mocked up homepage.

NEAR AND FAR With in-built GPS comes new ways to connect with friends and gamers across the world and a new system called Near will tell you where your friends are and what they are playing. Sounds interesting.

FLASH, AH Foregoing UMD or a purely digital future, the NGP will use flash memory cards (yet to be revealed) with the suggestion being that publishers could release games at retail on these cards as well as online.

PSN BENEFITS With online gaming wherever you go you also get access to PSN, the PlayStation Store and your friends. Voice chat online seems like a real possibility, but that has not been confirmed. Web browsing is also shown to be available.

DUAL ANALOGUE It's what we've all been calling for and finally Sony is giving us a handheld device with the same controller set up as a DualShock. Hoorah. It also has Sixaxis tilt control.

A storm brewing

Why *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* is a force to be reckoned with

2011 IS A great year for PS3 exclusives so we thought we would remind you of just why you should be excited about one of the hottest upcoming games, *MotorStorm: Apocalypse*.



> SPEED DEMON *MotorStorm* has never been a sluggish game, but *Apocalypse* feels insanely fast. It might have something to do with the confined streets or the debris falling from the sky, but it's intense.



> CRASH AND BURN There's a real *Burnout* feel to the latest *MotorStorm* and that's a good thing because when it comes to action racers *Burnout* is really the benchmark to be judged by.



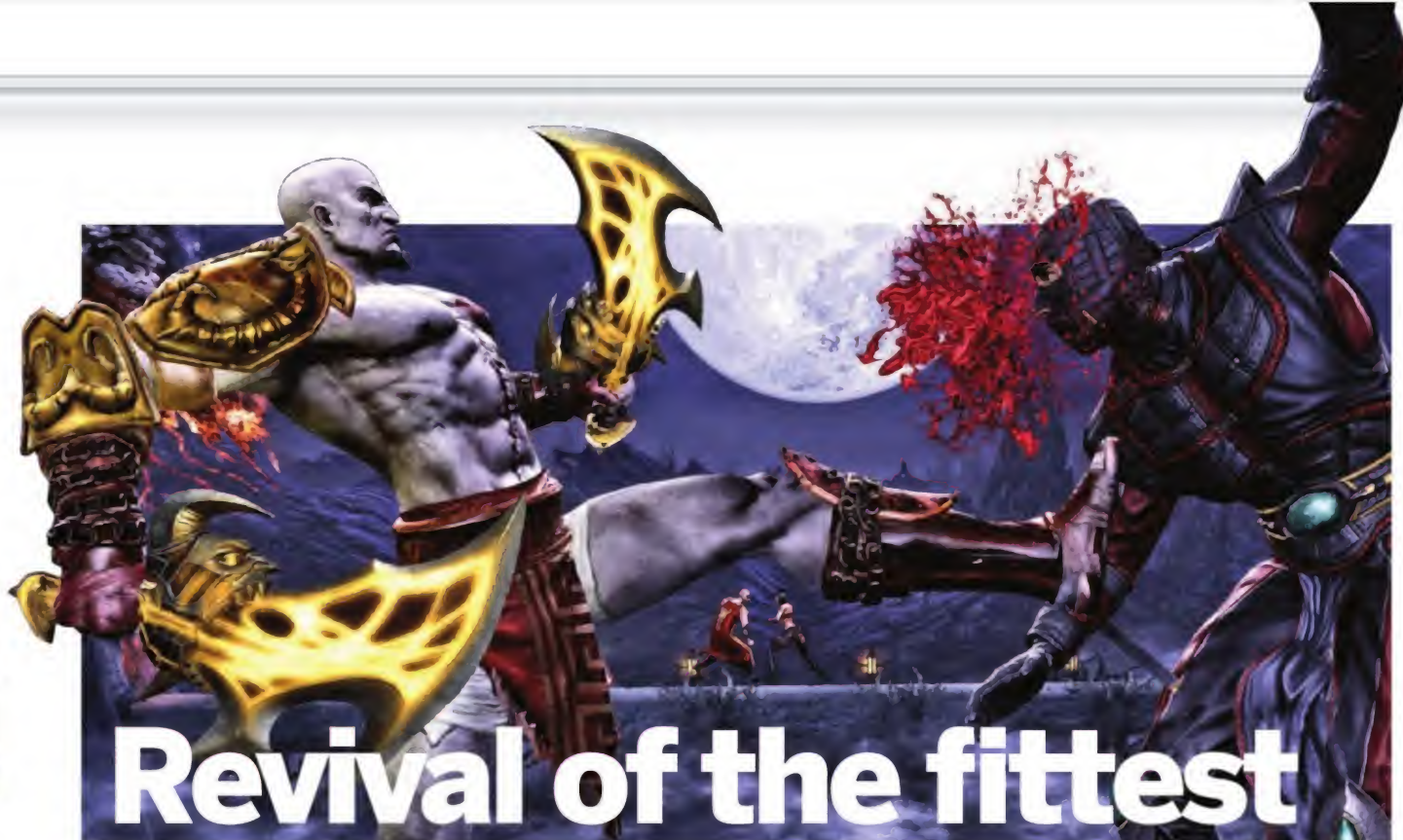
> INSANITY REIGNS Rather than doing the boring, conventional thing of setting its urban racer on the streets, Evolution thought it'd be a good idea to set some of the races on roofs instead... Genius!



> CUSTOMISE YOUR GAME Custom-made gaming is what it's all about on PS3 and *MotorStorm's* online mode creation promises to be some of the best we've seen in a racing game.



> SIGHTS AND SOUNDS And then there's 3D, which may seem like the feature Sony demands of its developers these days, but in *Apocalypse* it's not only well used, but makes the game even better.



Online gaming responsible for beat-'em-up resurgence, thinks NetherRealm

Mortal *Kombat* developer NetherRealm Studios believes the rise in popularity of online gaming is one of the main reasons why beat-'em-ups have seen a resurgence in recent years. While fighting games like the *MK* series had suffered for a while in the face of FPS and open-world titles, the likes of *Street Fighter*, *Tekken*, *Soul Calibur* and *Mortal Kombat* are all now seeing their sales and interest levels rise, according to studio producer Hector Sanchez.

"From a more mainstream perspective, you could say that the popularity has shifted away from fighting games in recent years because the focus has been on big, open-world sandbox games and FPSs," Sanchez began. "Thanks to the increase in the number of homes that have access

to broadband, competitive gaming is inevitably becoming more attractive to players and fighting games give people the opportunity to showcase their talents and compete in smaller, bite-size doses. They can just pop in, kick some ass, and pop out."

All the more reason then to take *Mortal Kombat* back to its brutal roots to stand out

from the crowd, according to Sanchez. "I think our visual style and gameplay style are a good alternative to other fighting games. We are a lot darker and our gameplay is full of over-the-top moves that you don't see in other titles. We're fortunate that the fighting game community is big enough to offer something to satisfy all kinds of players."

Boon hearts Kratos

God Of War is *Mortal Kombat* creator's favourite PS game

IT CAME AS no real surprise to hear that Kratos would be appearing in *Mortal Kombat* on PS3 after Ed Boon revealed that *God Of War* was his favourite PlayStation game.

"If I had to pick one, I would say *God Of War*," he revealed. "That game had so much personality and unapologetic brutality that I had to play it. Fans had to have each game because they needed to know what eventually would happen to Kratos." Now he has the chance to pit Kratos against some of his own, equally brutal creations.

Recon and rethink

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier looking to shake up multiplayer shooters

Ubisoft Paris has assessed the state of modern online multiplayer and is looking to bring something new and innovative to the field, according to *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* senior producer Stuart White. It has been impressed by how its competitors have moved forward since the last *Ghost Recon*, but it believes it can innovate while standing by its own core gameplay.

"We've seen great experience out there, but focusing mainly on spectacular, on-rails, sprint-and-spray gameplay," explained White. "We want to stay true to the Tom Clancy games' values of being a little more cunning and offering more means to resolve a situation, even in the middle of the fiercest, spectacular action."

The key for White is getting players to work together and so keep the important theme of co-operation as well as making it enjoyable for players regardless of skill level. "Co-operation and multiplayer have improved a lot since the *GRAW* games were released, but we think there's still work to do to make the multiplayer experience less of a slaughter for non-hardcore players by pushing co-operation and team play," he explained.

"In the past years, lots of effort has been made with the single-player mechanics. But we, as game designers, still need to refine the learning process for multiplayer games. It's not fun to spend years waiting for the next round to begin if you've been headshot in the first minute of the game."





QUESTION?

Why reboot Tomb Raider?

SINCE SQUARE ENIX announced that Crystal Dynamics would be returning to the adventures of Lara Croft we've wanted to know why this classic franchise is being rebooted after so many years.

Fresh start, fresh ideas

Sometimes the collected and inherited gameplay ideas of three generations of a videogame can build up to a point where they become cumbersome and clichéd. A reboot is an opportunity to spring clean a franchise.



Core values

What makes any franchise unique? That's really the key question developers ask themselves when they have a major product on their hands and a reboot allows them to refocus on those core values.



A new age

Lara has started to feel a little dated. As she remained a cartoon character her world became more beautiful and realistic. This contrast was beginning to wear thin. A new design offers the chance to level the field.



Starting over

Didn't like that idea that's been used since the first game? Throw it away. The great thing about a reboot is that whatever happened before doesn't matter any more. You can put it behind you without really upsetting many people.



The Drake factor

Lara Croft has undoubtedly had her toes stepped on by Nathan Drake and *Uncharted*. Its more action-packed and tightly plotted adventures have made *Tomb Raider* look plodding and tame. A reboot can put a stop to all that.



ANSWER:

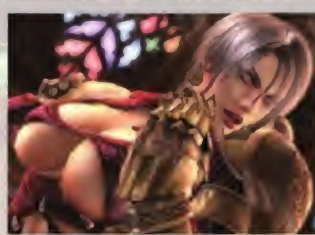
Lara Croft is just too good to leave behind



REASONS WHY...

We welcome the return of Soul Calibur V

NO SHAME *Soul Calibur* knows what it is and it doesn't care. Japanese games get flak for their depictions of burly men and large-chested women, but *Soul Calibur* does it anyway. It is completely shameless and frankly we approve of its attitude.



GOOD FRIENDS Over the years *Soul Calibur* has brought together one of the best fighting rosters in the beat-'em-up genre. From Mitsurugi to Voldo via Sophitia and Ivy, there are few titles whose fighters are so recognisable and loved by fans.



SOUNDED OUT We find the music and sound effects in *Soul Calibur* to be some of its best aspects. That intro music in *SCIV* was stuck in our heads for weeks after playing it and the sword clashing is so satisfying.



VERY SPECIAL GUESTS Since the PlayStation *Soul Cal* has featured Heihachi Mishima, Darth Vader, Starkiller, Yoda, and Kratos on the PSP version. We hold out hope for more superb cameo appearances.



IT'S FOR THE PEOPLE *Soul Cal* has always felt like a game for the people. Easy to pick up, not too hard to master and a lot of fun. Few fighters are this accessible without being ridiculous.



word on the tweet

loonyboi
"New PSP looks pretty great. Props to Sony for going whole hog on the hardware. No idea why there's a rear touchscreen though."

Jason Bergman, senior producer for Bethesda, also backing the NGP.

Beyond a doubt

Ubisoft classic will stand test of time, says HD dev

Beyond *Good & Evil* is on a par with cinematic greats like *Blade Runner* according to its high-def remake's associate producer, Eric Damian-Vernet.

"I think *BG&E* is for videogames what *Blade Runner* is for movies – a timeless classic," Damian-Vernet said. "It has aged unbelievably well. It has a very distinct and detailed sci-fi/fantasy backdrop; exotic and charming characters and critters. It's colourful, full of emotions and humour. The sheer variety of gameplay challenges and activities, and the top-notch production values would still put to shame many recent releases."

While the devs on the HD remake could have made some drastic changes, it was often decided not to implement them for fear of breaking the game's original charm.

"We've been very careful when choosing what to modify," Damian-Vernet explained. "For instance, we're committed to enhancing the visuals up to next-gen standards but we have to preserve the original game's visual flair. We could have added self-shadowing but it wouldn't have worked with the fantasy cartoon style. Some of the original's charm would have been lost in the process."

Read More!

Check out the full interview at www.play-mag.co.uk/interview

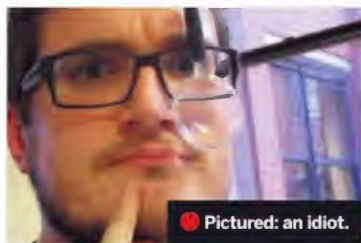


Fitness Quest IX

MONTH ONE: the third 'month one'



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS forgotten, our quest to give *EA Sports Active 2* the Finest, Most In-Depth And Utterly Perfectly Correct Review Of All Time (Ever) faltered once again as Ian failed – once again – to do anything of worth. He blamed some stupid reasons nobody believed – being in other countries, being ill, being dumped, but we don't believe him. All he is to us is a massive, layabout slacker worth nothing but the scorn of the Imagine office and the *Play* readership as a whole. You're



dirt, Dransfield. Scum! You'll never amount to anything!

We then realised that tough love wouldn't actually work on Ian, as he reacts to aggression with aggression. 15 people died that day. Lest we forget.

Nonetheless, at some point we will make sure to get the ball rolling and we will finally be able to say we've moved beyond 'month one'.



which we have now been stuck on for three months – we're having a close look at the process, as one of these images illustrates. For now, though, we will have to accept the fact that what started as an honest attempt to do a review over a matter of months (as well as for a fat man to lose some weight) has turned into a bit of a nothing.

And you know what? We blame David Beckham. His stupid face on the ads for *EA Active* puts us off ever wanting to try to be anything. Stupid pretty face. Ahem.

An Eastern fallacy

No East/West divide, says Platinum Games producer

There is no such thing as a divide between Japanese and Western development, only a divide between good and bad developers, according to Platinum Games producer Atsushi Inaba. Speaking exclusively to *Play* Inaba expressed his displeasure with the ongoing debate about the future of development in Japan and stressed that he does not think that Platinum's way of working is necessarily a recipe for success for other studios, despite its continued critical success with games like *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish*.

"It's not like Platinum Games is trying to present a role model to the Japanese gaming industry and my personal opinion is that it's not very meaningful to segment the industry into Japanese and American," Inaba insisted.

"Wherever you go there are two kinds of game developers. One is good developers who have brilliant ideas and passion and the means and the resources to make their ideas into games. The

other is bad studios who are not as good at what they do and those studios will be naturally selected to fail."

Inaba admitted that the current climate in Japan was a cause for concern, but that he could only focus on making games, not on the money side of the business. "As you pointed out there's been a lot of talk about the Japanese gaming industry and some of what's been said might be true, but all there really is are some publishers in Japan are not doing so great," he

It's not very meaningful to segment the industry into Japanese and American

concluded. "As a developer and creator all I try to do is create games that will be loved all over the world, so instead of trying to categorise things in boxes of being Japanese or American, I'm really thinking of things at a global level. Rather than trying to be first or second rank in Japan, we're trying to provide a unique stance to the world."

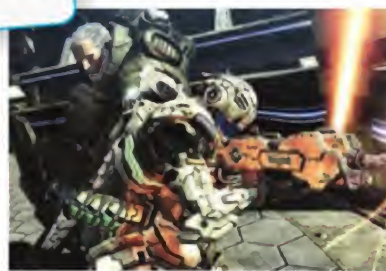


word on the tweet



TimOfLegend
"LittleBigPlanet's Cakeinator is THE GREATEST gun to ever be placed in a game. It makes me hungry, though."

Double Fine's Tim Schafer
expressing the torment we all feel playing *LittleBigPlanet 2*.



YOUR SAY

It's good to talk Would you buy a PlayStation Phone?

SONY ERICSSON HAS a PlayStation Phone on the horizon with access to PlayStation games and a classic D-pad/button setup, too. It's been rumoured to be on the way for years, but the most important question has always been would you buy one. We asked you guys to tell us what you think.

If I had the money and needed a new phone I would – **Mr healey**

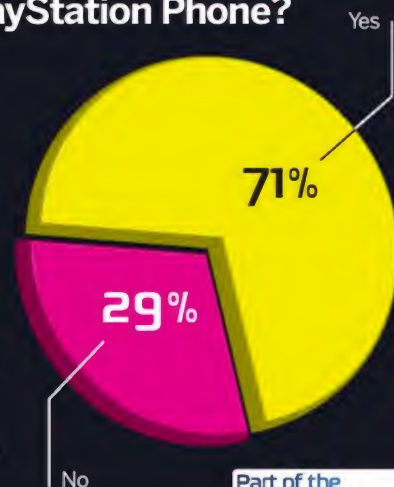
No as I don't have the money to waste on good phones any more – **rb1007**

The question is, can I afford it at the time I need a new phone? I'll probably need a new phone in the next few months or so, and then if that could last me for a while and was pretty good, then I'd look at getting it. Otherwise probably not – **Scrum**

Probably, I wouldn't get it straight away, like when the iPhone just came out it was full of bugs, but once it was tested well I would probably get one – **skrudge7**

I can just imagine the stares I would get from pulling out a PS Phone, no thanks. I think the iPhone is my limit in terms of extras you probably won't use much, and I still don't have one – **the bossman**

Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Part of the
Now Gamer
Network



Volition given freedom to go wild with Red Faction: Armageddon

THQ gave Volition all the freedom it needed to be as crazy and carefree as it wanted in the development of *Red Faction: Armageddon*, according to its producer Jim Boone. Now on its fourth instalment, the series has always found new ways of engaging players and the latest is to introduce aliens to the franchise, but while

over as vice president of Core Games and he came over when we were just brainstorming very early on the game," Boone began as he explained the thinking behind the move to us. "He was encouraging us to just go crazy and do something very different. It's the fourth game in the *Red Faction* series so we should just feel free to come up with

Every *Red Faction* game has been a little bit different to each other

crazy stuff. He even mentioned, 'if you want

that has proved unpopular in some quarters, for Boone it's what keeps the series fresh.

"What happened was it came from Danny [Bilson] around the time that he took

to do aliens or something like that, try aliens."

This was exactly the kind of encouragement the development team needed, according to Boone, as it had

started to get a little too comfortable with its franchises and releasing quick sequels. "We're very much into doing something crazy and different, but we've started to settle in a little bit," he admitted. "With *Saints Row* we have now done *Saints Row 2* and then there was *Red Faction: Guerrilla* going into *Red Faction: Armageddon* and we felt like this was a good time to go back to our roots. Every *Red Faction* game has been a little bit different to each other so let's do something fun."

So whether or not the introduction of aliens to the franchise seems like an odd move to you or not, at the very least you can expect a very new gameplay experience.

Breaking down barriers

Mindjack points to future of single and multiplayer integration, says producer

Mindjack is the starting point for a wave of titles that try to break down the barriers between single-player and multiplayer gaming, according to its producer Yoshinori Yamagishi. With a development history dating back to the early days of *Dragon Quest*, Yamagishi has been in the industry for more than 20 years and he explained the thinking of developer feelplus in attempting to bridge this tricky gap.

"Games have evolved along two paths," he said. "One is the combination of a story and playing, leading to the conventional campaign game. The other path is the fun of co-operating and competing against people, which has grown by setting up network environments and has led to current multiplayer games.

"We want to combine free competition and co-op play within a story and the setting in which its plot develops," he explained.

A number of games have talked about attempting this, weaving stories into multiplayer or allowing players to take on the roles usually taken by AI, but *Mindjack* is one of the first to complete this ambition. "The concept of clearing away the wall between single and multiplayer is a new experiment and idea for a shooter. As you guessed, this system allows the player to enjoy replaying *Mindjack* forever and we think that there may be many more games like this in future."

Has *Mindjack* succeeded in its attempt? You can read our single-player and multiplayer reviews of *Mindjack* on pages 91 and 95.



WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

Stuff and ting, with added demands

1 Android devs on PSN

The link-up between Sony and the Android OS means we'll see PlayStation Suite on our HTC's and whatever else (as well as the PS Phone). But what about the other way? Will we see Android apps making their way to PSN? We really should.



2 Something something PSP2

Look, we don't know – this came in late for us. Better connectivity between PS3 and PSP2? That'll have to do.

3 More Move experimentation

We get it – you can do point-and-shoot games with Move. But what about *echochrome II*? Proof, if proof is needed, that interesting things can come from motion control.



4 Full Steam ahead

It won't happen, but *Portal 2*'s Steam features on PS3 have us speculating. And complete Steam functionality on Sony's console would be a wonderful thing indeed. Oh, the sales...



5 More PSone classics

Linking in with the PlayStation Suite news of PSone games being on Android, we thought about how they're named 'classics'. Then we realised a lot of what's available under this banner isn't classic at all. This must be remedied.



WWWT5 news:

We asked for more emulators on PS3 so we could legally play the games of yesteryear. Then the Neo Geo classics popped up on PSN. Coincidence? Yes. Still makes us smug though, as if we called it. (We didn't).





Guinness World Records

Q&A

Gaz Deaves, editor of the Guinness World Records talks to Play about a new era in competitive gaming and what it takes to be a record breaker

What kind of traits do you see in gamers who hold world records?

There's a real mix of personalities. For example, Johnathan 'Fatal1ty' Wendel [multi-record breaking gamer] is ultra-competitive: during breaks in tournaments he can often be found challenging other gamers to tennis matches, golf and poker tournaments. Meanwhile, Ryan Hart the *Street Fighter IV* world record holder [with a 169 win streak and 30 tournament wins] is much more laid-back; he's well-known for his ability to read his opponents during tournaments so perhaps he does this to help him play mind games.

How do you think online gaming has helped foster competitive gaming?

Enormously. With the arrival of online

gaming to consoles, a whole generation of gamers has realised that being the best in their school or among their friends isn't good enough any more. Leaderboards have brought score hunting back in a big way and the meta-game of Trophy hunting on PS3 has created a new breed of super-gamers competing with each other to get the most Platinum Trophies. Right now there are two gamers in the Middle East, each of whom has over 200 Platins, fighting it out for the world record.

Can you recall any extreme examples of gaming records or attempted gaming records?

The highs and lows of record-breaking are never more obvious than in the endurance categories. The guys who

succeed are often tight groups of friends who just love a particular game and want to hang out playing for a good cause. But the 'graveyard shift' from 2am-4am is enough to make even the most hardened veterans question their sanity.

What, in your opinion, is the most astonishing record in the book?

I'm a huge fan of gaming history, so it was a pleasure to hear from a collector of rare videogame systems called Richard Lecce. He lives in the USA and has over 500 unique consoles including all the standard fare plus a load that even we had to research.

How do you verify records and ensure they aren't cheating?

For high score records and speed runs, we work very closely with Twin Galaxies, who monitor scores for all kinds of games. For other kinds of records, we have strict rules as to the evidence we can accept to prove the authenticity of a claim, including video evidence, witness statements, photos and press coverage. We also try to make it to as many gaming events as we can.

The Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition has been around for a few years now – how would you say competitive gaming has evolved during that time?

We've seen the return of old-school competitive gaming in a big way. *Street*

Fighter IV has been a massive success, with players of all abilities taking each other on at home or over PSN while at the same time huge tournaments take place all over the world.

What would you say the future of competitive gaming is?

I think there's enormous room for competition in gaming to grow and

The guys who succeed in the endurance categories are often tight groups of friends

diversify. The influence of big pro gaming leagues will increase as more people take an interest in the best players of their favourite games. With multiplayer modes now seen as an essential feature for almost every game, I think we'll see some innovation in gameplay as well. The likes of *Uncharted 2* and *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* have brought some great ideas about what makes a great competitive experience and it will be interesting to see what other developers come up with to try to improve on them. Either way, the gamer wins.

What would you say is the secret to nabbing a gaming world record?

Be creative and work to your strengths. If you can come up with an original idea for a gaming challenge that is difficult to do, entertaining to watch and hasn't been done by anyone else before, it could be a brand-new Guinness World Record.



Guinness World Records works closely with Twin Galaxies to verify records.

Uncharted's musical secrets revealed

The Drake's Fortune and Among Thieves composer reveals how he created the iconic scores

Greg Edmonson, the composer behind both *Uncharted* and *Uncharted 2*, revealed to **Play** recently the thinking that helped create some of the most memorable music in modern gaming. Having never worked on a videogame score before, Edmonson was thrown in at the deep end with Drake's first adventure, but quickly adapted before creating a new system of recording to help give even more depth to the sequel.

"The first [*Uncharted*] was my first experience in videogames, and

just threw caution to the wind and said I was going to write melody, let's hope it all works."

The final result was something that reflected the epic scope of Naughty Dog's game, but it was more complicated than simply writing more melodies. "Game engines had evolved beyond the concept of writing stuff that was just going to loop endlessly," said Edmonson. "I developed this weird technique. Instead of writing a nonstop three-minute piece, I'd write 45 seconds and then build to some

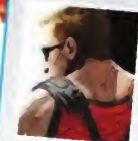
Edmonson was thrown in at the deep end with Drake's first adventure

[Naughty Dog] said you've got to be real careful about writing too much melody, because if the music's going to loop, or the player stays in the same place for a long time, you don't want them saying, 'oh no, here comes that damned flute melody again', so the first game was more ambient," Edmonson said. "The second game was a whole different deal. It was way more panoramic and cinematic, and also I just didn't want to do ambient any more. So I

musical crescendo, and then break for a couple of seconds, and then go back into it. Instead of just having to always break it down into a loop that let Naughty Dog and Sony cut between sections, so they could play the music a bit more intact and cut to different sections as opposed to having to just turn stuff on and off in a loop."

Read More!
Read the full interview at www.play-mag.co.uk/interview

word on the tweet



DuvalMagic
"So... should the day that Duke Nukem Forever launches be called Duke Day or D-Day?"

Gearbox president Randy Pitchford walks a fine line. Go with Duke Day, Randy.

Win the Assassin's Creed soundtrack

Three limited-edition copies of Brotherhood score up for grabs



As many of you will know, the *Assassin's Creed* soundtracks have been some of the best in recent years and it's all been thanks to Jesper Kyd. This renowned and multi-award-winning composer has worked on all three console soundtracks and his most recent one for *Brotherhood* was as good as ever. However, up to now it has only been released digitally. However, **Play** can exclusively offer you the chance to win a limited-edition CD of the *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* soundtrack, not available anywhere else. All you have to do to be in with a chance

of winning one of these great prizes is answer the following question.

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood is set in which period of Italian history?

- A) The Renaissance
- B) The Rapture
- C) The Revolution

To submit your answer, email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject heading 'Soundtrack Comp'. Please include your full name, age and address. The closing date for entries is 16 March 2011.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS All entrants must be 18 years old or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Soundtrack Comp'. The closing date for entries is 16 March 2011. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | | Gran Turismo 5 Sony Still riding high and why not? With each passing month Polyphony is making GT5 even better. 85% |
| 2 | | LittleBigPlanet 2 Sony A favourite at Play and winning the hearts of PS3 owners, Sackboy is clearly onto a winner. 96% |
| 3 | | FIFA 11 EA Still a lot of FIFA love out there naturally and we hear some news of FIFA 12 isn't far away. 91% |
| 4 | | Mass Effect 2 EA We were overjoyed to hear that <i>Mass Effect</i> was coming to PS3 and delighted to play it, too. 97% |
| 5 | | Call of Duty: Black Ops Activision Concerns over how <i>Black Ops</i> plays over PlayStation Network could be affecting sales here. 94% |
| 6 | | DC Universe Online Sony We're not sure this MMO will hold in the chart, but we're intrigued by its strong start. 80% |
| 7 | | Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood Ubisoft Ezio's second outing remains strong in the charts. 91% |
| 8 | | Medal of Honor EA Since PS3 was its lead platform MOH's online seems more stable than <i>Black Ops</i> . 86% |
| 9 | | Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit EA We feel like a broken record going on about how much we enjoyed <i>Hot Pursuit</i> . But we really did. 91% |
| 10 | | Fallout: New Vegas Bethesda Few games on this list can match the single-player value you get from <i>New Vegas</i> . 88% |

PSP CHART

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | | FIFA 11 EA There's no budging this one as <i>FIFA</i> remains as popular as ever on the go as it is in people's living rooms. 69% |
| 2 | | Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4 Warner Bros Plenty of <i>Harry Potter</i> love out there still and when you mix that with Lego love you get chart success. NA% |
| 3 | | Football Manager 2011 Sega There's not much room left on the PSP to keep pushing <i>Football Manager</i> . Bring on the PSP2. NA% |
| 4 | | God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta Sony No need to worry about getting your Kratos fix this year as he's appearing in <i>Mortal Kombat</i> . 79% |
| 5 | | Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker Konami Our PSP game of 2010 finally breaks back into the top five after a short absence. 92% |

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.



THE FANBOY
He only does PlayStation



stand out from the crowd... conform

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, as I've been led to believe, then *Call Of Duty* must be blushing a particularly deep shade of red on all four of its cheeks. I haven't witnessed this level of sycophancy since I got

particular the *Modern Warfare* games is beginning to get me down in a pretty bad way. It was sickening enough when it was just shooters that seemed to be borrowing heavily from the book of *Call Of Duty*, but now it seems every game that comes along wishes to be granted entry to the School Of Duty.

CALL OF DUTY MUST BE BLUSHING A DEEP SHADE OF RED

my first HDTV and people started grabbing at the hem of my coat before scampering off whispering, "I touched him, I touched the future man."

The incessant referencing of *Call Of Duty* and in

Split/Second: Velocity was one of the first games that came along and seemed to openly talk about taking its inspiration from Activision's first-person shooter without being a game about burly men firing guns at foreigners. *Black Rock* liked the big

plumes of smoke and all the Hollywood touches *Infinity Ward* brought to its FPS series. I liked the flair of it and who didn't? We all enjoyed *Modern Warfare* to some extent, but I didn't feel the need to spend the rest of my days in a ghillie suit. Sure, I did some shopping in the town centre one Saturday while wearing one, but I was promptly thrown out of the supermarket and threatened with arrest.

The worst so far, though, has been *SSX: Deadly Descents*, which is still some way from being shown properly but I'm already hearing all the wrong noises. For a start it's got mountain climbing. Climbing! *SSX* used to be all about tumbling down the sides of mountains as fast as inhumanly possible until you either died or performed a stunning trick (something death defying, naturally). Is it just me or does having to climb up the mountain to start with kind of get in the way of the whole tumbling down it thing?

I think my righteous indignation on this subject (and, oh my, can I be a self-righteous SOB when I want to be) comes

from the confusion as to what exactly developers think the benefits are of mimicking *Call Of Duty's* 'aesthetic'. But what is the *Call Of Duty* look exactly? Do they really believe that it's this mythical stylistic choice that makes the difference? *Infinity Ward* and *Treyarch* together do seem to have found a 'look' that works for them, but is that what makes their games so popular? I would hazard to say no. I more confidently pronounce hell no. I conclude by saying balls.

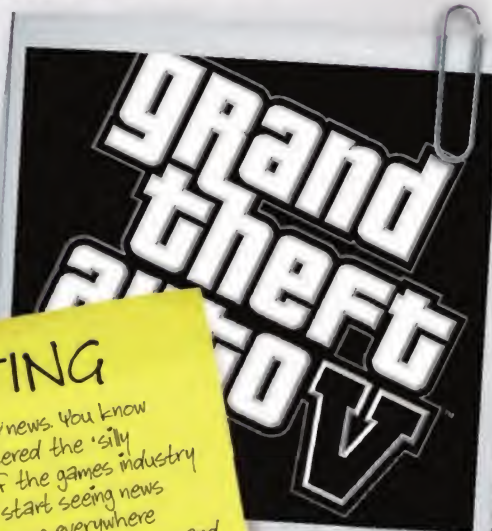
LIKING

The PlayStation news domination. Everywhere you go at the moment the news is absolutely dominated by PlayStation related talk. If it's not the wealth of titles on the way to the PS3 then it's the PSP2. If not the PSP2, then it's the PlayStation Phone. If not the phone it's the PS3 hacking. It's the talk of the town.

HATING

Fake GTA V news. You know you've entered the 'silly season' of the games industry when you start seeing news stories pop up everywhere speculating on the features and locations of videogames that haven't even been announced yet. You'd think they had better things to do

DISCLAIMER: The Fanboy is a PS3 enthusiast, but his views may never represent those of PlayStation or its affiliates.



PS
THEY
has bee
2012. Th
epic franc
since the
promises
least seve
WE SAY:
hear that
we're still
haven't co

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose



DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month

DO: Bear in mind that we didn't get to play *Killzone 3* online when we reviewed it. It's a single-player-only review.



DON'T: Underestimate the brilliance of *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*. It's one of the best fighters to grace the PS3.



DO: Think about the idea of consoles fighting a real war rather than trying to play *Hyperdimension Neptunia*.



DON'T: Think just because *Mindjack* has a cool gameplay idea that it's actually going to be any good. You'll be disappointed.



Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 75

PLAY CREATES, SHARES WITH... LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

This month's Play creations from the big games on PS3



RYAN KING He is the master of all he surveys (on **Play**) and the leader of men (and women... on **Play**) and thus he commands us from his fiery castle of merciless discipline and creativity. None shall question his authority or his absolute power (on **Play**). Bow down before him.



JON GORDON There is a very simple logic at work here. Jon likes cake, therefore Jon is surrounded by cake. There's no great mystery there. Just look how happy all that cake has made him. Such is the influence of *LBP 2* and how it can bring limitless joy to its players.



IAN DRANSFIELD & CHRIS MCMAHON The deadly duo, one protecting the other as Ian tackles the worst games that come into the **Play** office so that Chris doesn't have to. It's a fine relationship depicted in all its beauty by this rendition of the pair. And long may it continue.

Read our online *LittleBigPlanet 2* review on page 94

Made something cool in a game?

Send an image to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk and share it with the world.

{The Vault}

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Zoidberg Plush

£24.99 at ForbiddenPlanet.co.uk

Yay for Zoidberg! He's our hero and what we really like to do with our heroes is hug soft fabric facsimiles of them. Anyway, we all love *Futurama* on the **Play** team and Zoidberg is definitely up there as one of our all time favourite characters.

USG Ishimura

£20 at InsertCoinClothing.com

Hopefully you're still getting your frights and kicks from *Dead Space 2*. But as a fan you'll appreciate this shirt for the Ishimura, the location for all the horrific events in *Dead Space*. Necromorph protection cannot be guaranteed.

Final Fantasy Wall Scrolls

From £17.99 each at ForbiddenPlanet.co.uk

We sometimes feel a bit wrong when we don't include some form of *FFVII* merchandise on these pages. It's such an important game in the history of PlayStation that it should almost be the mainstay of the magazine. Anyway, if you were touched by that adventure this artwork may be for you.



Origami Sheet

£20 at InsertCoinClothing.com

In our last issue we picked out *Heavy Rain* as our game of 2010 and clearly it is getting some love elsewhere too thanks to this little tribute shirt from Insert Coin. Even though it doesn't say a lot it still looks menacing to us. Perhaps we ought to have a rest.

word on the tweet



IGLevine

"PSP2, do want. Don't get the hate. Two analog sticks = shooters on a handheld for the first time. Potential, let's hope for follow thru."

BioShock creator Ken Levine loves Sony's new handheld.

IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT GOOD MAKE IT 3D



3DEE

£25.87 at MySoti.com

A motto to live life by in 2011? We sort of hope not, but there's always room for a little satire isn't there.

Here's to a whole bunch of rubbish 3D films and games.

MySoti
15% OFF
these great T-shirts

This Month's Code:
PlayGear202

Onward Ever Downwards

£23.52 at MySoti.com

We don't really know what's going on here, but this is one of a series of shirts with the same character. It's a pretty cool design.



Survival Mode Ryu

£11.99 at ForbiddenPlanet.com

Street Fighter has gone action figure bonkers recently. The Survival Mode variant figures include members of the original *Street Fighter IV* roster in some differently coloured outfits.



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 17 February and 16 March. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-Shirts.



Guinness World Records 2011: Gamer's Edition

£14.99 RRP

This year's collection is as bizarre as ever, mixing in a great deal of videogame trivia alongside actual feats of human videogame endurance and skill. Gaming stat fans should give it a look for sure.



Angry Birds 8" Plushes £9.99 at Play.com

It's great to finally see *Angry Birds* on PSN and once you start playing it you'll struggle to keep it out of your mind so you may as well succumb to it. Why should *Angry Birds* only consume your time during the day? You should get some of these plushes and then you can spend the night with them, too.

Grayson Hunt Figure

£12.99 at Play.com

EA doesn't waste time when it comes to establishing its brands and it now wants to make its titles multimedia experiences. Whether it be books or action figures, EA is stretching out. This figure of *Bulletstorm*'s lead character is a prime example.

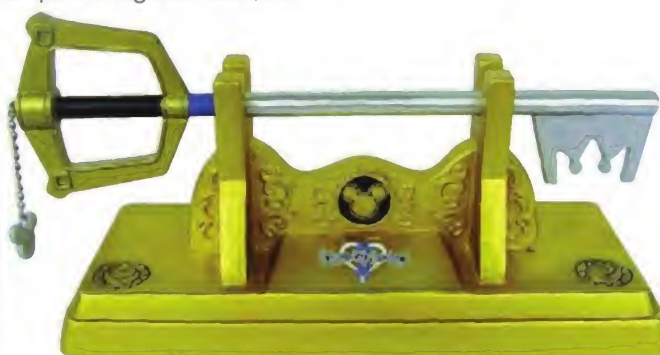


Isaac Clarke Figure

£11.99 at

ForbiddenPlanet.com

A bit more *Dead Space* love in *Play* is never too much and we really like Isaac Clarke's new armour design in *Dead Space 2*. Considering he's only an engineer he's become a bit of an alien arse-kicking master and his new threads reflect that.



Kingdom Hearts Sora Keyblade Paperweight

\$23.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

Square Enix has a mastery for creating iconic weapons for its heroes and they're all the better when they don't make sense. The Keyblade from *Kingdom Hearts* is a prime example. It is a pretty cool weapon and it makes a fine paperweight.

Lego Ice Dragon

£19.99 at Shop.Lego.com

Ninja Lego! We know it's a bit weird. When did ninjas become so mainstream? We were still getting over the whole zombie thing and now they're springing ninjas on us. Anyway, we like this little set and we like the idea of having a bunch of Lego ninjas on our desks.



HIGH FIVE

Five game characters who should have action figures



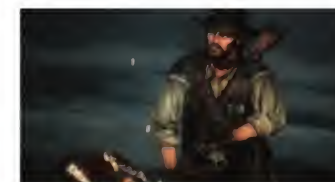
Nathan Drake Uncharted Series

What happened to the *Uncharted* toys? There was talk before *Uncharted 2* about a series of vinyl toys. They never emerged, but maybe *Uncharted 3* will kick things back into gear.



Scott Shelby Heavy Rain

Would it be wrong to start making *Heavy Rain* toys? We're not sure, but the ultimate test for us is 'would we put it on our desk'. In the case of Shelby we most definitely would.



John Marston Red Dead Redemption

Rockstar's never really gone in for action figures that we know of and that's a shame. A John Marston figure would be pretty cool. You could even have some zombie editions.



Razputin 'Raz' Aquato Psychonauts

Any game from the minds of Double Fine would translate superbly to action figure form and *Psychonauts* is probably the best example of this.



Barry Burton Resident Evil

If you read our last issue you'll know that Barry Burton is our hero on *Play* and it pains us daily that of all the *Resident Evil* merchandise out there you still can't get a figure of him.

T-Virus And Anti-Virus Display

\$199.95 at Shop.Capcom.com

This is the kind of thing that gets our blood pumping. We love it when someone re-creates an iconic object from a game and makes it into something we can show off. This T-Virus display set makes us very excited.



Keep Up With Play



Never fall behind with Imagine eShop

Fallen behind with your **Play** purchases? Been out of the country for a while and found yourself in some mad, inhospitable place that doesn't stock the world's greatest PlayStation magazine? Fear not. You need never miss an issue of **Play** or find your collection full of holes thanks to the Imagine eShop. There you can buy the latest issue of the magazine direct, subscribe to **Play** and even pick up those elusive back issues that you may have missed. You can access it all at www.imagineshop.co.uk.

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Sometimes all you need is 140 characters to get your message across, so why not follow the awesome **Play** team on their Twitter feeds? You can find links to each of their Twitter accounts at Play-Mag.co.uk or go direct with @PlayMagRyan, @PlayMagChris, @PlayMagJon or @PlayMaglan.

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on the **Play** Podcast as we test our gaming knowledge, grill each other on the latest games we've been playing and call Jon a liar during Fact Or Fib. You can download individual episodes from www.Play-Mag.co.uk.

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Go to www.Play-Mag.co.uk for daily updates and features

Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month

Pointless predictions for 2011

1 ACTIVISION TO RELEASE CALL OF DUTY GAME

It's all very hush, hush at the moment, but I happen to know thanks to my extensive sources that Activision has been very happy with the performance of *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*. So much so that it's seriously considering a follow-up, possibly with a more modern feel looking at contemporary combat. Not so sure that will be as successful.

2 FANBOYS TO BE 20% MORE INFURIATING

A study to be released in a couple of months' time will show fanboy trends of the last couple of years and project how attitudes will be moving in the coming years. I haven't seen this study and will probably never read it, but I can confidently say that fanboys will be 20-23 per cent more infuriating than we've experienced in 2010.

3 FIFA WILL SELL WELL

The football genre has never really been much of a seller on consoles, but I feel very confident about this year. The key reason for this is great interest in football in nations such as Russia and Qatar. You may also see an increase in Suriname, Burundi and Laos.



@PLAYMAGCHRIS
If I really am a holographic projection being beamed from the edge of the galaxy, I may as well not bother with any work today.

No particular reason for that, but perhaps David Beckham is planning a visit. Anyway, *FIFA* will do well.

4 PS3 TO SELL MORE CONSOLES

Console sales for the PS3 will continue. They may go up. They may go down a little, but ultimately more people will own a PS3 by the end of 2011 than own them today. This will be hailed as a huge success by Sony and its supporters and **Play** will confidently announce that the PS3 won 2011 this time next year.

5 YEAR TO END IN DECEMBER

Protests through the year will try to stop it, but despite the violence and the injuries to members of the public that ensue, the year will again end in December. That will mean another 12th month of the year with little to no game releases and a complete shutdown of the nation. If only they had moved December to the middle of summer, everything would have been okay.

<http://bit.ly/g55yHA>

DC Universe Online – first thoughts

> THE INSTALL IS HUGE

The *DC Universe Online* disc went into my PS3 at 6.30pm and I didn't start playing until around 8.30pm. Around half of that install is a download for patch 1.01 and with the game currently at patch 1.02, it means the wait for new players should be even longer than what I sat through.

> THE LEVEL CAP IS LOW

I got my copy on Thursday, the day before it was released. I started playing that evening, went out on Friday night so didn't play it then, played it most of the weekend. I'm now at level 25 and the level cap is 30. So... that's a few days of solid play bringing me to the level cap.

> IT'S SIMPLE

The combat is simple enough that you can descend into button-bashing

territory and just about survive, especially at lower levels. Given the gameplay is anchored to a needlessly complex and unresponsive menu system, it's just as well you don't have to think too much when the action kicks off.

> THERE ARE LOADS OF MARVEL WANNABES

Seriously, this can't be stated enough. You have enough customisation options where it could reasonably be claimed that the only limit is your imagination and all people want to do is make Hulk and Deadpool. It's already so bad that people have taken to naming their characters 'Bulk' and 'Rulk' because 'Hulk' was taken a looong, long time ago.

> IT'S ALRIGHT, I GUESS

Yeah, it comes back to this cutting, insightful and authoritative opinion. It's alright. It's okay. It's good. It'll do.

<http://bit.ly/g55yHA>



@PLAYMAGRYAN

Off to interview and play MVC 3 producer. Wonder how he'll react if I run away with Arthur and MODOK spamming bullshit projectiles.

STAT ATTACK
7 million
program requests
made via PS3s
on iPlayer in
December

Five completely fitting videogame roles for actors (or not)

LARA CROFT PLAYED BY ROBERT DE NIRO

It takes a lot of world experience and charisma to play a role like that of Lara Croft. We think Robert De Niro, with his wry smile and impressive body of work, could bring something fresh and unique to the role.

PYRAMID HEAD PLAYED BY DAKOTA FANNING

Pyramid Head played by a muscle-bound bodybuilder? That's too obvious. We say stick a big triangle on Dakota Fanning's head and we have the next Freddy Krueger. Terrifying.

STREET FIGHTER'S RUFUS PLAYED BY ADRIEN BRODY

He'd have to put on some weight, but that's what actors do these days, right? He lost all that weight for *The Pianist*, surely he can put some on to play a *Street Fighter* character?

THE FIRST COLOSSUS IN SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS PLAYED BY GARY BUSEY

Imagine how scary a 100ft Busey would be, towering over you moaning and groaning.

THE PRINCE FROM PRINCE OF PERSIA PLAYED BY JAKE GYLLENHAAL

Oh, wait...

<http://bit.ly/hxbZ4t>

@PLAY MAGJON

Where have I been? It's been too long. Where are my beans?

The top 5 most depressing games

> HEAVY RAIN

It all starts off so well. Everybody's happy – mum's doing the shopping, dad and the kids are playing in the garden. But then it starts raining, and everyone starts dying.



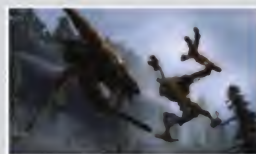
> MAX PAYNE

The subject matter in this game is pretty grim. First off his wife and newborn daughter are murdered, he fails to save an innocent woman and his best friend is gunned down.



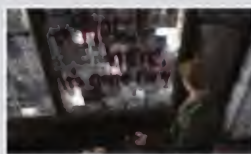
> HALF-LIFE 2

We were going to put *Doom II* here – billions dead and earth being overrun by demons is pretty depressing after all. But in *Half-Life 2*, there's no end in sight for the residents of City 17.



> SILENT HILL 2

A man who's lost his wife ventures into a mysterious town with vague hopes of finding his deceased wife still alive. All he actually finds is the truth: it was he who murdered his wife.



> I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM

Now this is where it gets really morbid. *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream* was a 1967 science fiction short story by Harlan Ellison. Cyberdreams turned it into a game that deals with torture, genocide, insanity, rape and more. At least there's a good ending as well as bad.



<http://bit.ly/gLHwGo>

Ask us anything... just about

Is it stressful writing to deadlines? – the bossman

Deadlines are endlessly stressful, but I love them. I can't speak for the other chaps and chapette, but if I didn't have deadlines imposed on me I would likely do no work at all – Ian@Play

Do you have special PS3s for playing dev code to review games? Are there any differences between the PS3s you have at home and work? – Mr healey

For playing review and preview code we have a debug console. It looks like a PS3, it has the same interface and basically behaves in all the normal

ways. The only difference that I know of is that the in-built code of the console reads the review or preview disc and recognises it as a game. If we put the same disc in a regular console it wouldn't know what it was and wouldn't play it – Jon@Play

If you could work in any games company, what would it be? And how would you make their games better? – Scrum

Sega. I was on the Sega side of the console wars when I was a kid, so that company will always be special to me. I'd get *Shenmue III* made. Then I'd retire and play it – Ryan@Play

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PLAY DISCUSSION

"Play team has been spoilt with edibles this week. We kicked off with crisps and chocolate, moved on to doughnuts, rounded off with some peanut butter M&Ms (from New York no less) and we're now working our way through some massive biscuits. We may get some work done in-between."

RETRO PLAY GOODNESS

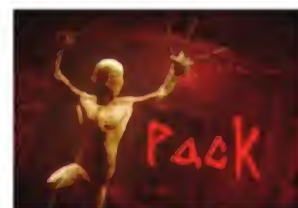
We chronicle Play's classic covers exclusively on Facebook.



Things you may have missed on our YouTube channel

YouTube

www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK



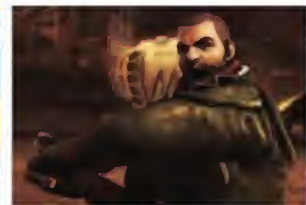
DEAD SPACE 2 – MEET THE NECROMORPHS



FINAL FANTASY XIII-2 TRAILER



WWE ALL STARS – RANDY SAVAGE TRAILER



RED FACTION ARMAGEDDON TRAILER



NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT 2 UNLEASHED



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3 – PHOENIX GAMEPLAY



PLAY. 's CYBERPUNK

Cyberpunk hasn't just influenced some of our favourite films - Blade Runner and *the first film only* of The Matrix being great examples - but also many of our favourite games. Here's what makes the genre so great:



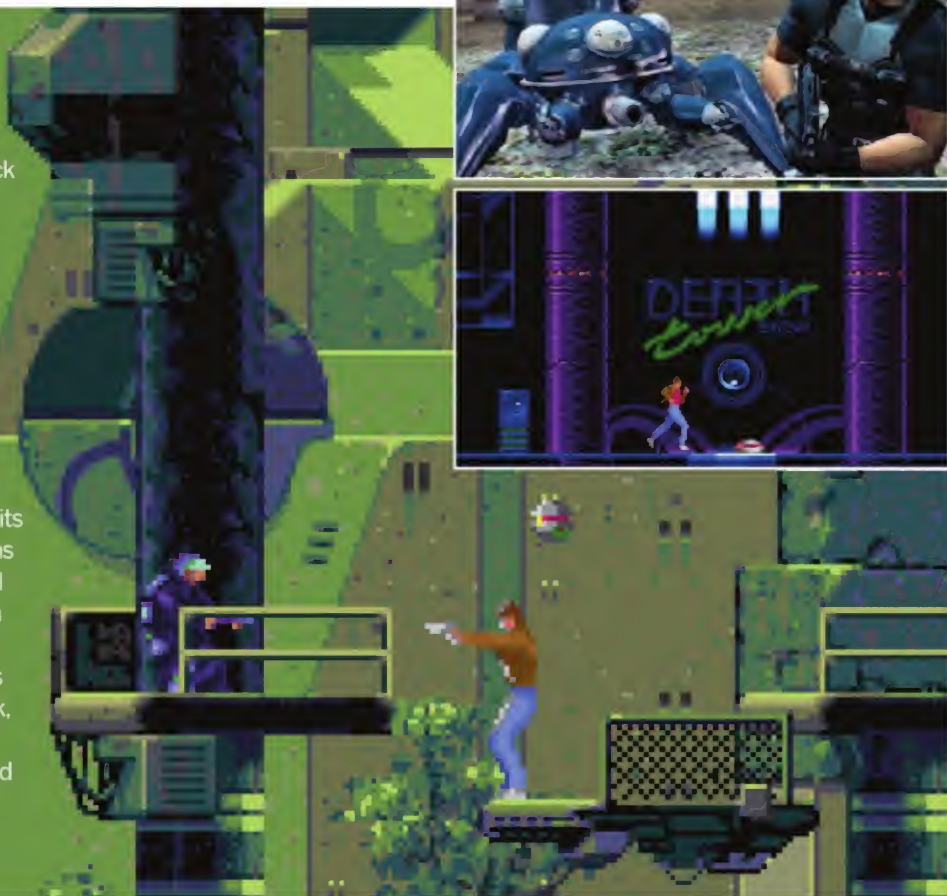
A colourful history

There are many, many great titles that have been inspired by cyberpunk, and in turn have inspired many more modern videogames. Before the days of PlayStation we had brilliant titles like *Beneath A Steel Sky*, *Flashback*, *System Shock*, *Snatcher* and *Shadowrun*, and on PlayStation we've had cyberpunk games like the *Syndicate* series, *Ghost In The Shell*, *G-Police* and, arguably, *Rez*. It's surprising to not only learn how many cyberpunk games there are, but how influential they were. There is one game we've missed out, of course. The most influential of them all, which we'll come to later.



It's just bloody cool

Cyberpunk was most popular in the Eighties. Back then real-life technology was crap, so a glimpse at the near future in animes like *Akira* was pretty awesome. These days we're walking around with *actual datapads* and talking about cloning like it's as natural as breast milk, and as such the genre has lost some of its edge. But still, there remains something undeniably cool about the pairing of hi-tech with low life. *Blade Runner* is one of the best examples of the genre - a seedy, dark, industrial LA where state-of-the-art technology is sold at grimy market stalls and cybernetics are about as exciting as an old sock.





It's the perfect genre for videogames

There are few genres better suited to games than cyberpunk. Films like *The Matrix* empower gamers by making their protagonists tech-savvy hackers. But more generally, near-future worlds that have been overtaken by tech are what games do best. They allow plenty of scope for imaginative design, and concepts like transhumanism and bio-augmentation allow for videogame mechanics like superpowers to be included without feeling unbelievable.



It gave us Deus Ex

Yes, it was the cyberpunk genre that gave us the *Deus Ex* series, and for that we're eternally grateful. The original *Deus Ex* came out on PC in 2000, then arrived on PS2 in 2002, and it blew us away. It was one of the first FPSs to prove that having a gun didn't mean you always had to shoot stuff. There was choice in how you tackled problems and an emphasis on RPG elements. Without it we wouldn't have games like *BioShock* and *Borderlands*. The first sequel to *Deus Ex* felt too conventional, but the second sounds anything but... see page 30 to get the lowdown on why.



Cyberpunk's not dead

We may have been a bit down on cyberpunk's place in the modern age, but that's not to say the genre's died. In fact, we reckon we might be in for a resurgence. Square Enix's *Mindjack* has already hit the shelves, but it's the company's other big title that's really got us excited; *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. It's cyberpunk for the iPod generation, all sleek cybernetics and robotic machinery. *Human Revolution* will capture that juxtaposition of old and new that makes cyberpunk so unique – the image of Adam Jensen's mechanical arm grabbing a glass of bourbon encapsulates it perfectly.



CYBERPUNK'S alive and kicking, and if *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* is as brilliant as we think it's going to be then we predict we'll see more games return to the genre in the future. Have you seen the director's cut trailer? To put it in the words of one Thomas Anderson, aka Neo: "Woah".

5 REASONS TO GET PORTAL 2

Valve is giving PlayStation 3 all sorts of love these days, but what does that mean for you?

3 STEAM CLEAN

That bot drowning down there; it represents the Xbox 360 in this equation, because only the PS3 is getting access to Valve's Steam network. That means cross-platform play with gamers on PC and Mac as well as cloud saving that means you can pick up your game on your friend's machine without importing a file.

2 GLADOS IS BACK

With single-player and co-op campaigns to play through you get twice as much GLaDOS as you experienced with the first *Portal*. A 100 per cent increase in the amount of GLaDOS is equal to a 100 per cent better game according to our early estimates.

4 PLAY ON ANYTHING

If you buy a PS3 copy of *Portal 2* you get a Steam code to download it for your PC or Mac too at no extra charge. That means you can jump between your PS3 and home computer, picking up on *Portal 2* where you left off on either machine.

1 CO-OP

Portal was a solo affair with your only companion and half-mad (or perhaps fully mad) AI who seemed intent on killing you. Now you can share the experience with your half-mad friend who is also intent on your demise. Watch your back.

TEAM PICKS

The Play team picks its all-time favourite Valve games



CHRIS

HALF-LIFE

When most people talk about Valve they talk about *Half-Life 2*, but *Half-Life 1* was like nothing I'd seen before. It was so immersive and is still one of my favourite games.



JON

PORTAL

The Orange Box had some great games on it, but the standout for me was *Portal*. It was short and sweet, but it introduced me to a world and to gameplay that's stuck with me since.



IAN

STEAM™

STEAM

My favourite isn't a game – it's Steam. It started slow, but has revolutionised how games are bought on PC. A wonderful, wonderful invention I love dearly.



RYAN

LEFT 4 DEAD

Nothing compares to the first time you play *Left 4 Dead* online, giggling in sheer terror and anticipation of what might happen. Then the Tank music hits. Dum! Do do do do...

5 PUZZLE PERFECT

We're loving what Valve has come up with for the single-player and co-op portions of its game. Co-op feels like an extension of the first game with more crazy portal-making antics, but the solo story introduces a whole bunch of new puzzles, tools and characters to the formula.

The anatomy of...

Nathan Drake

Mischievous rogue, serial womaniser, devil-may-care adventurer... Nathan Drake is easily one of the greatest, and most liked, characters of modern gaming. Let's take a deeper look at what makes him so loved



HEADS UP

Look at that cheeky little face. Sporting a look of mild humour, concern and what looks suspiciously like vague constipation, Nathan Drake is a happy-go-lucky chap who laughs at danger and then makes a quip about it. And that hair. You know there's no product in there, Nathan Drake wakes up and his hair is just like that. That's how cool he is.



ONE RING TO RULE THEM ALL

This is the ring that Drake "kind of inherited" from his distant descendant Sir Francis Drake. It has the co-ordinates of one of Sir Drake's expeditions on it, which kicks off the narrative of the first game. It's also inscribed with Sir Drake's motto, which reads 'Sic Parvis Magna', meaning 'Greatness from small beginnings'.



IT'S ALL IN THE JEANS

Look at those jeans. They're not fancy jeans. They're not so tight and skinny they cut off the blood flow to the rest of the body. They're scruffy, thrown on and faded in a 'wear them all the time' rather than 'pre-faded because it's cool' kind of way. It all adds to Drake's charming everyday persona.



"HALF-TUCK IS THE NEW MULLET"

Yes, that's right, it's Drake's infamous half-tuck, first noticed by Tim Schafer. Here's what he had to say on Double Fine's blog: "The most next-gen thing about [Uncharted] was Drake's shirt. Check it out: somehow it's tucked in, and yet not tucked in, at the same time. Of all the technical marvels in *Uncharted*, this was the one that mystified me. On his left side, he tucked the shirt in to show his trim figure and stylish belt buckle. But his right side is untucked, like the shirt of a wild man, a renegade, a scoundrel!"

The many fashions of Nathan Drake



Here Drake's sporting a DIY parka that's been stitched together from various bits of material. We hope it's as comfy as it looks – Drake puts it on not long after being shot in the stomach and blowing up a train.



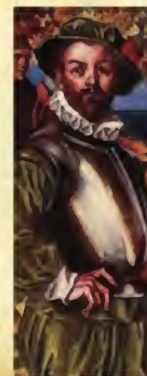
Here Drake has accessorised with a fancy scarf wrapped around his neck. Silly boy. You're in the desert! It's really hot! He's also chucked on a bandolier. We tried that for a night out once. We got chucked out of the club.



Here we see that Drake has gone for the 'bigger equals better' approach to life. We find it difficult to imagine Drake could do half the things he usually does if he were actually that big – like get off with Elena Fisher, for example.



We're not entirely sure what Drake is wearing here. It seems to be some kind of all-in-one grey bodysuit. It's probably some new 2011 fashion just in from Paris. Very haute couture.



Why can't Drake dress more like his ancestor? And no, we don't mean by turning on the Sir Francis Drake skeleton skin in *Uncharted 2*. We want to see Drake kitted out in full 16th Century garb. It's a good look.



AND FINALLY...
Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

stop
please



The killer 3D app

THEY SAY: Sony has done a deal with *Sports Illustrated* to offer an exclusive 3D version of the mag's famous swimsuit edition photoshoot on PSN this month.

WE SAY: Since shooting Helghast in 3D doesn't seem enough incentive, you may as well pull out the half-naked women we guess.



A Messi business

THEY SAY: Lionel Messi, cover star of Konami's *PES* titles recently, has been outed by a team-mate as a regular *FIFA* player causing minds to explode globally.

WE SAY: On the whole footy players aren't known for super intelligence. We wouldn't guarantee they weren't playing *PES* all along.

UNSUNG OR CLUELESS

Mainstream media drops gaming ball... again

THEY SAY: According to *The Wall Street Journal*, 2010 has been a surprising year in the world of videogames with a number of unknown and un-hyped titles having a massive impact on the industry. Such titles include *Fallout: New Vegas*, *God Of War III* and *Gran Turismo 5* on PS3. The *WSJ* believes these games "existed under the surface of the hype but still delivered hours of fresh action for gaming pro and rookie alike."

WE SAY: We've started referring to the *WSJ* as the 'Wall Street JournLOL' after this. It was a cheap shot, but then this was a pretty cheap take on the games industry. We've come to expect a certain level of misinformation among mainstream media outlets with regards to videogames, but we thought it was on the wane. What's particularly strange is the notion that these games, which ranged in sales from 1.5 million to 5.1 million, were unknown. We just had to have a good laugh about it in the end. It was either that or crying.

WARNING!
THIS GAME WAS
UNDER THE RADAR...
WATCH OUT!



THE MOTION HEALTH MYTH?

Are fitness games a load of bull?

THEY SAY: According to US studies, motion-controlled gaming may not be the healthy alternative to traditional gaming that some believe. Motion-controlled games have been shown to increase your heart rate from between 40-60 per cent, but moderate exercise increases your heart rate to over 60 per cent. The studies have concluded that the gentle nature motion games makes them ideal for rehabilitation.

WE SAY: This evaluation was reported in the *Standard Examiner* in Utah and while its conclusion may prove erroneous in the long run it is an important thing to know. Just because you play *Killzone 3* with a Move controller doesn't mean you're getting fitter. A Slurpee promotion for *Killzone 3* and *LBP 2* in the US won't help fitness levels associated with Move gaming either.



Logo fiasco

THEY SAY: THQ launches a new logo for itself marking either the destruction of its reputation or the arrival of a new major player in the videogame world.

WE SAY: It's just a logo. What does it really symbolise? Just the company that it represents. This row gave us a big headache.

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CREATIONISM

There's been concern, excitement, some spiffy trailers and a lot of bluster about storytelling when it comes to Deus Ex: Human Revolution. But we've played it now, so you can stop paying attention to peripheral details and focus entirely on us for the next few pages as we let you in on our augmented opinions

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

2.0

Guns may look exciting, but they're not what the whole game is about.



Being brought up to think that the whole point of the future is that it's sterile, cold and unwelcoming, we were slightly taken aback by the style behind *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. So accustomed as we are to cool blues, intimidating blacks and lonely greys accompanying our Worlds Of Tomorrow that we were genuinely surprised by *HR*'s yellow and gold. It seems like such an irrelevant element; one that shouldn't be the kind of thing you open a cover feature

IT'S A BOLD OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE DEVELOPER

with, but it struck us as a statement of intent from Eidos Montreal. This is a future you've seen before, but it's very much their take on it – their stamp on the *Deus Ex* universe. Simply by changing a colour scheme we see a bold opening

statement from the developer, as well as a look that really is quite appealing.

Our time with the game started where most good things start – at the beginning. Players take on the role of Adam Jensen – ex-SWAT copper and current member of the private security firm tasked with protecting the interests of human augmentation research and development outfit Sarif Industries. Also, it should be pointed out: he is very much a man without any metal bits. At least not any we know about. Some

scene-setting, a walk through the labs and introductions to the characters you're likely to be dealing with throughout the game,

as well as an instant curiosity attached to what on earth is going on. How did the lab make the advances in augmentation technology it has? Jensen's old flame and researcher at the lab, Megan, made the discoveries, but she doesn't seem too happy about how she's done it. What's

HISTORY'S PAST (PART 1)



THE ORIGINAL *Deus Ex* was released all the way back in 2000 on PC, before making its way to the PS2 in 2002 in a graphically spruced-up, but ultimately lacking port (that we still awarded 87% in **Play 88**). With the benefit of it being 11 years later, we're now going to ignore the control issues with the PS2 version and just talk about *Deus Ex* as a whole: it's one of the best games ever made. If you were to come to it fresh these days it might be a bit... unwieldy; it's aged quite badly, there's little explanation as to what you

need to do and – in all honesty – it is a game that's been overtaken by its own reputation in certain circles. But so what? It's brilliant, it was so ahead of its time it hurts and everyone who played it has the ability to sit down and chat about it with other fellow players for hours on end. It has left an indelible mark on gaming as a whole and without it we would be far less likely to see the blending of genres we see so prevalent today. Buy it on PS2 for around £8, or just nab it off Steam for £5.99 on your PC.



Melee attacks can be upgraded through augmentations.

going on? We don't know, and we didn't get to find out during our time with the game.

It's handled well, though, and the guided walkthrough at the opening – as well as a brief chance to muck about messing with a world rich with *stuff*. Emails to read, newspapers to glance at and excerpts from books, lectures, speeches (real world and otherwise – we spotted something from a BBC Four programme, for example) – it all drags you in and helps with the illusion the game world instantly creates. Soon enough, though, what with this being a game and all, the labs come under attack from an unknown group – a rival Team Science? Anti-aug protestors? Something else? It's another chunk of mystery to throw into the mix, and it's dealt with in a fairly straightforward run-'n'-gun shooter section. Fortunately, just as we were wondering why *Deus Ex* wasn't playing like *Deus Ex* was supposed to play, we were killed. Well, nearly. After fighting his way to Megan to help her escape, a couple of augmented invaders decide to introduce Jensen to his own internal organs. While he's still alive and conscious. Don't worry, though, it's all in the plan, and one introductory cut-scene later we return to find a newer, faster, *better* Jensen going back to work.

Six months pass between Jensen's 'Murphy From Robocop Moment' (commonly known as the MFRM) and his return to active duty, and he announces to the player he is now a fully fledged robo-man by doing what we'd all clearly do in the same situation: engaging his robo-specs. Yes, he has an augmentation on his face that means he is never without sunglasses. Brilliant. He also has things like the robotic stabbing arms we've seen in other pre-release hype, though they're obviously not as cool as robo-shades.

On returning to the Sarif building, the player is ordered to meet at the helipad to help out with a hostage situation at one of the company's warehouses – the reason Jensen has been called back to active duty. But first you need to fix your eyesight, which is playing up a bit (stupid robo-eyes), and – of course – this opens the game up to a considerable amount more messing about. Exploring air vents, hacking into the computers of employees to find out who has been stealing drugs from the labs (if they've been stealing at all) and, just like before, going into the girls' toilets when you really shouldn't. Being scolded for not making our way straight to the helipad was the kind of thing we were used to, and the exploration continued. That is until we were told >



Jensen's opening task is ill-fated from the start.



ROBO-SHADES.

THE RANGE OF APPROACHES OPEN TO THE PLAYER IS VERY MUCH THE *DEUS EX* WE'D HOPED FOR



► the situation at the warehouse had taken a turn for the worse – curiosity piqued, we finally made our way to the vertibird, where we were informed that our inability to walk in a straight line without getting confused by something shiny in the corner had led to the hostages being murdered. Oops. This kind of punishment for not listening might not be anything new in gaming, but it is something that hasn't made itself known in mainstream gaming for quite a while, with many games instead so focused on holding the player's hand they would never dream of punishing them for dawdling. Massive plus point to *Human Revolution* goes right here.

Finally arriving to the mission grounds of the warehouse, we were soon hit by a feeling of familiarity. Presented with a situation and told to sort it out however we want to: that's *Deus Ex* alright. The police are holding off their assault

to give you a chance to sort matters out, so it's you against dozens of bad (or are they just misguided? OR ARE THEY?) guys. Want to run and gun? You can, but unless you use cover effectively you will be chopped down in record time – *Human Revolution* doesn't mess about

HUMAN REVOLUTION DOESN'T MESS ABOUT WITH DIFFICULTY

with difficulty or, again, punishing the player for being so blasé. Naturally we opted for the stealthy, non-lethal route, sticking in cover – third-person for easier views of the surrounding area – and singling out enemies to incapacitate them. Obviously we were soon spotted for being a bit rubbish and things... well, they turned lethal. Including the point where we accidentally stabbed a guy with the good ol' arm-blades by

holding ◎ instead of just tapping it for a melee knockout. That was a genuine accident, though. M'lud.

The range of approaches open to the player is very much the *Deus Ex* we'd hoped for, and the fact you're never limited to just one is

comforting. Rather than decide on an approach and sticking with it throughout, the game is more than open to Jensen suddenly changing his mind and going on a killing spree midway through

a perfect stealth entry. A few battles through areas in the building, a bit of sneaking and hacking about 20 computers in a row flew by with the amount of fun we were having making up our plans as we went along, and it didn't take very long before we were back in the habit of actually paying attention to our surroundings and taking our time in entering a room and taking out the bad (OR ARE THEY?) guys.

And we haven't even mentioned how nice the music stays throughout.

On reaching the leader of the attackers, the player isn't faced with a straight-up boss battle – they have the opportunity to talk the aggressor down and rescue the woman he's holding hostage through the power of words alone. Naturally, as we're a bunch of silver-tongued devils here on **Play** we were able to secure the freedom of the terrified woman and diffuse the situation without resorting to violence. Though for some reason we did decide to let the perp leave the crime scene, telling him we too wanted to get to the bottom of what in the name of Thor was going on (not a direct quote). Cue entering SWAT team berating us for letting the 'bad guy' (or is he? OR IS HE?) get away, a mixed feeling of smugness combined with guilt and a general sense that this could have gone a lot worse than it actually did. A bit of a wander, a few chats with angry coppers and an end-of-mission natter with our pilot and it was time for our hands-on to finish up. As well as being time to return to a less yellow/gold world, unfortunately.

Once it's all over, the mission is complete and – in our case, at least – the hostages are dead because you were too busy crawling through air ducts to get the job done, it's time to reflect. What could you have done differently? What went wrong? Could you have got by without shooting that guy in the face? But would it have been as *funny* if you hadn't shot him? It's a familiar feeling for anyone who has played a *Deus Ex*, a *Thief* or a *Hitman* in their gaming life and it brings with it the warm memories of discussing your approach, of finding out a friend

HISTORY'S PAST [PART 2]



FOLLOWING UP ONE of the best-received games of all time was never going to be an easy task, and Ion Storm didn't help itself with *Deus Ex: Invisible War*. Or 'that sequel', if you're feeling particularly catty. Appearing on PC and the original Xbox, skipping over PlayStation this time around, the game was lambasted by fans for being an oversimplified and shortened step back from the original. But then, we're not those people. *Invisible War* was – is – in no way a game that can compare to the original *Deus Ex*, but it is a game that stands up on its own merits. There are arguments both for and against many of the contentious

issues throughout, but the sequel gets more than enough right to warrant a mention, such as nicely woven, branching storylines and an atmospheric, believable world. Yes, it had technical hitches up the wazoo, but aside from the frothy-mouthed fanboys there are few who played *Invisible War* and didn't actually have themselves some fun while doing so. These are the kind of comments that would have us lynched should they become public, so let's keep it on the downlow for now. We would never recommend you buy it for Xbox for about £10, obviously, so instead stick with the Steam PC version for £5.99.

did it *completely differently* or of realising that you missed something you probably shouldn't have missed. Which means you'll have to go back and play it again. Now, a few hours with *Human Revolution* isn't enough to gauge how well the game will hold up to these repeated plays – we certainly didn't see everything the missions we played had to offer, but for all we know we could have missed a single newspaper article and a chance to talk to a hilarious janitor. We also could have missed four hours of additional content. It could go either way, but it's definitely more than promising to see the game struck our curiosity gland with some force, and we're desperate to get back into Jensen's world to try to see what

we could do differently. We'll probably shoot that bloke in the face again, though. That was funny.

Choice also extends to the augmentations you kit Jensen out with. Modifying the body of the player character has always been a part of the *Deus Ex* experience and *Human Revolution* is no different, offering up more than 20 distinct ways to improve and increase the performance of the stock human body *spits*. After all, we all know robotic arms are better than dirty, greasy, fleshy ones, right? Right. What augmentations boil down to are improvements to how the player performs, as well as new abilities to throw into the mix. Need to be able to sprint for longer? Upgrade your lungs so you can hold more air in >



Look at the pattern on that robo-arm. It's lovely.



The game oozes atmosphere.



A lot of the imagery will seem familiar to Deus Ex stalwarts.



> them and tire slower. Want to not snap your feet off when you land after a long drop? Do up them legs. Then, of course, there are the augs we've seen in the numerous trailers, featuring every stealth-lover's favourite optical camouflage, the ability to fire little bombs out of your robo-parts to clear a room when surrounded and, of course, the ability to see someone having a crafty cigarette through a wall, punch through said wall and snap his neck. Teach the dirty smoker for being such a *dirty smoker*.

THE PLAYER WHO REALLY PUTS THE TIME IN WILL BE REWARDED

While it doesn't open up the world to a freeform land of any customisation you want (more like the aforementioned 20+ options), it does open the game up to a certain level of freedom, ladled liberally on top of an already freedom-rich mixture. Of soup. Freedom soup. It means a player can concentrate on upgrading the augmentations that suit their style of play, and as such opens up the potential to replay the game in completely different ways – by actually using the stealth option, for example, and not just talking about it as if you have ever had the patience to use it. You know who we're talking about. *You*. Upgrades are handled in a simple fashion, each costing a certain amount of points to install (usually two, it seems) and a single extra point for every level of upgrade. Points are handed out through the game by earning XP, and XP is earned by... well, by doing stuff. Exploring, completing missions, talking to the right people, finishing side missions – it all adds up, and it means the player who really puts the time in to try to find everything they can will

be rewarded with the ability to have even more robotic robo-hands. Everybody wins.

We have a concern with *Human Revolution*, but right now we're willing to put it down to how early the version we played was. Basically, we found the AI was letting the experience down a bit. For all the atmospheric setting, detailed world and wonderful music, the fact that enemies were literally lining up in single file to be shot really didn't impress. However, it's unfair to judge a game at such an early point and we

have every faith that the extended development time left for the new *Deus Ex* will be used to iron out these kinks

– it's just something that had to be mentioned for the sake of clarity. Having said that, it's not like either of the previous *Deus Ex* titles have gone down in history as having the best AI (in fact, we'd go so far as to say it was 'a bit shit' on the original game). But we're remaining positive on this factor, as the rest of the package impressed us so much.

We're at a point right now where *Human Revolution* still needs more polish in certain respects, so it's good to see it's receiving exactly that. There's no faulting the atmosphere or the world created by Eidos Montreal, though, and there is absolutely no doubt in our minds that this is very much a *Deus Ex* game. It may be in a different image, made by different people with a different stylistic ethos backing it all up, but the *feel* of the universe has been nailed, and that's something you just can't get right by accident. And we managed to get through all of this without saying 'the future's bright, the future's yellow/gold', too, as that would have been an utterly terrible joke not worth repeating... oh.



FORCED EVOLUTION

The mods we want to see

AUGMENTATIONS PLAY A big part in the world of *Human Revolution*, being the titular 'human revolution' being talked about and all. So what could Adam Jensen have done to him to make him more than just a human? Engaging farce aug...

WE HAVEN'T SEEN anything to prove our theory will be correct, but we'd guess that Squenix will introduce the ability to change Jensen's head into any of a dozen or so characters from their back catalogue. 59p per pop, DLC. You heard it here first.

WE KNOW ABOUT cloaking already, but it isn't just the eyesight of people Adam can hide from. He can remain out of sight from machines and anti-hacking software thanks to augmentations. Always handy if you want to go on a 15-computer-in-a-row hacking spree, as we did.

UNFORTUNATELY WE DIDN'T see an option to replace Jensen's arms with hammers – surely a perfect way to smite all of your enemies? Nevertheless, strength upgrades can turn you from a puny robo-man to a less-puny robo-man.

CHOICE IS AN issue in *Human Revolution*, and we're hopeful that there will be a point in the game where the player can choose to make Jensen a long-haired hippy, averse to violence in all forms. As such, his once-violent arm-blades could easily be replaced with hippy-friendly 'peace pipes'.

WE'RE NOT EVEN joking. Alright, maybe we are – there won't be any crotch augmentations available to the player in *Human Revolution*. But in real life there will be. You know there will be. If anything, crotch modification will be the driving force behind a major push for real-world augmentations. Seriously.

SUPER SPEED? The ability to land from height without taking damage? Nah, that's all boring. What we want to see is the ability for Adam to unleash his milky white thighs, dazzling all enemies in the area both with how milky and white they are, along with how utterly sexy he is.

IN THE FUTURE there will be many new technologies we rely on; we'll expect machinery to replace functions regularly carried out by humans and we will become augmented through this process of progress. And at the end of it, the pinnacle of humanity's forced evolution will be self-inflating Reebok Pump trainers.

☺ See? It's like a yellow *Blade Runner*.

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

MR FREEZE, CATWOMAN, TWO-FACE AND FRIENDS HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED FOR ARKHAM CITY BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE HINTED AT IN ARKHAM ASYLUM? THESE NAMES HAVE BEEN MENTIONED BUT HAVEN'T YET BEEN CONFIRMED...



Name: Mad Hatter
Real Name: Jervis Tetch
Powers: Hypnosis skills
Arkham Asylum sighting: Tea party

Bio: Obsessed with *Alice In Wonderland*, Jervis Tetch believed he was a character from that book. With a love of headgear and hypnosis skills, Tetch commits crimes themed on the book. Doesn't sound like the type of boss that will have you quaking with fear but there is potential for some interesting visuals. Still, we wonder what Play-themed crimes would entail?



Name: Great White Shark
Real Name: Warren White
Powers: Financial mastermind, intimidating visage
Arkham Asylum sighting: Teeth in a jar

Bio: Great White was sent to Arkham Asylum after pleading insanity to escape his crimes. When Killer Croc slices 'gills' into his neck and an accident leaves him without nose, ears or lips, Great White files his teeth to complete the look. Lacking powers, he has the connections and financial know-how to exert influence - could he command minions to attack Batman?



Name: Ra's al Ghul
Real Name: Ra's al Ghul
Powers: Immortality, exceptional strength and intelligence

Arkham Asylum sighting: Nametag on body bag

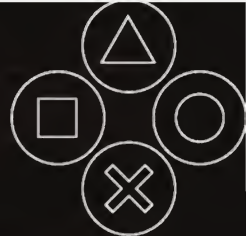
Bio: Most know him as the villain from *Batman Begins*, but Ra's al Ghul could end up in *Arkham City* as his daughter Talia has been confirmed. He can match Batman in terms of strength and intelligence but he also has immortality on his side, thanks to his Lazarus Pits. Which sound like pet-names for his armpits, but aren't. Is he Batman's equal?



Name: Black Mask
Real Name: Roman Sionis
Powers: Criminal mastermind, strong hand-to-hand fighter

Arkham Asylum sighting: Mask on wall

Bio: Taking over his parents' cosmetics company after killing them, Sionis bankrupted it with a failed make-up line that disfigured faces. Embarrassed after a buyout by Bruce Wayne and after his girlfriend dumped him in public, Sionis carves a mask out of his father's coffin and becomes the Black Mask. There's lots of interesting back story should Rocksteady go with him.

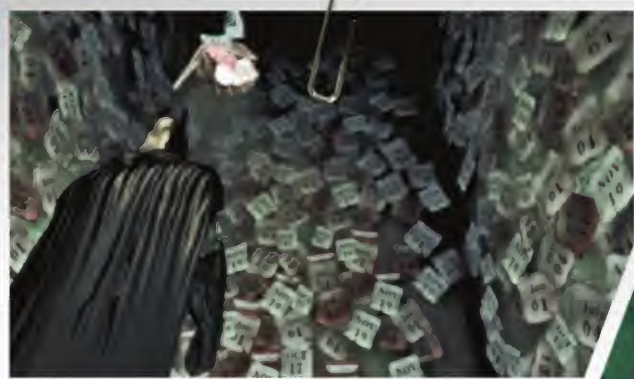


Name: Scarface
Real Name: N/A

Powers: Skilled with Tommy Gun, possible sentence

Arkham Asylum sighting: In a display box

Bio: Scarface is the name of a small wooden puppet controlled by The Ventriloquist (formerly Arnold Wesker and now Peyton Riley). Rather than being controlled by his master, Scarface exerts his influence over The Ventriloquist, forcing the duo into committing crimes. The dummy and ventriloquist combination could make for an interesting boss battle, forcing Batman to target one or the other.



Name: Calendar Man
Real Name: Julian Gregory Day
Powers: None

Arkham Asylum sighting: Dates stuck on cell walls
Bio: Commits crimes according to the calendar and is seen as a bit of a joke within the criminal underworld. Without any real powers either, he's a terrible idea for a videogame villain. But imagine if he would only appear on certain dates, as the game checks your PS3's internal clock? That'd be pretty special. He's rumoured to be in Arkham City, so we'll see how Rocksteady turn the farcical villain into a genuine threat.



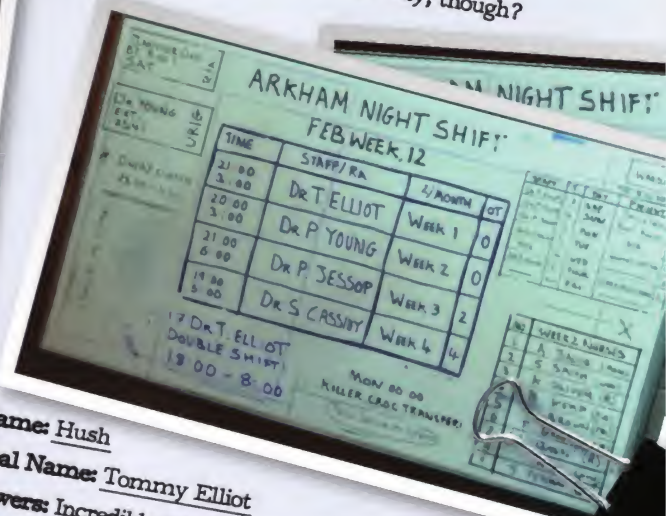
Name: Humpty Dumpty
Real Name: Humphrey Dumpler
Powers: None

Arkham Asylum sighting: Broken toys on shelf
Bio: Known for taking things apart and trying to put them back together, often failing, Humpty Dumpty was sent to Arkham Asylum after dismembering his abusive grandmother thinking she was broken and needed fixing. Would make for a unique boss, one that could be environment based such as taking platforms apart. And other... stuff. Maybe. Okay, maybe not.



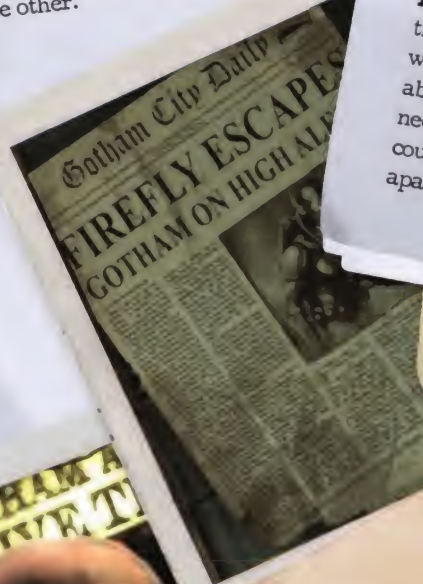
Name: The Ratcatcher
Real Name: Otis Flannegan
Powers: Controls rats

Arkham Asylum sighting: Ratcatching gear
Bio: Otis Flannegan is a ratcatcher who learns how to control rats, using them to help commit crimes and transport illegal goods around prison. Sounds like one of the worst villains of all time but his control over rats gives him some form of wave attack. Is he dark and disturbing enough for Arkham City, though?



Name: Hush
Real Name: Tommy Elliot
Powers: Incredible intellect, skilled surgeon

Arkham Asylum sighting: Name on medical roll call
Bio: Tommy Elliot and Bruce Wayne were friends as kids until Tommy tried to kill his own parents. Wayne's father intervened and Elliot grew up hating Bruce. A skilled surgeon as an adult, Elliot disguises his face with bandages. There could be an emotionally charged back story with Hush's involvement, as he is essentially the dark reflection of Bruce Wayne's life.





LET'S END THE CONSOLE WAR

The war has raged on for years. Lives have been lost. Forums conquered. Brave men have had their spirit broken by unrelenting keyboard warriors. No more, as we take to the streets to declare a winner. Onward comrades!

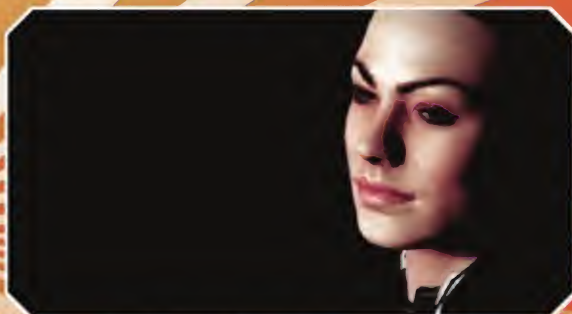




MASS EFFECT 2

First game to kickstart the revolution is *Mass Effect 2*, where PS3 goes to war with its powerful weapon of 'different lighting', which is cancelled out by Xbox 360's weapon, known as 'also different lighting'. Xbox 360 owners say their *Mass Effect 2* is now cheaper. PlayStation 3 owners say they get all the DLC with theirs. Who wins? Nobody! Unless you don't have broadband. Then the PS3 version is better. But bloody hell, don't buy *Mass Effect 2*. Get broadband first.

PLAYSTATION 3



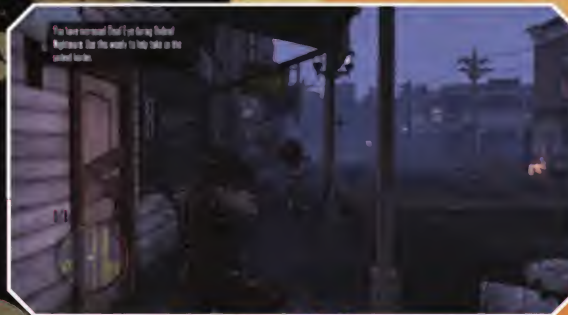
XBOX 360



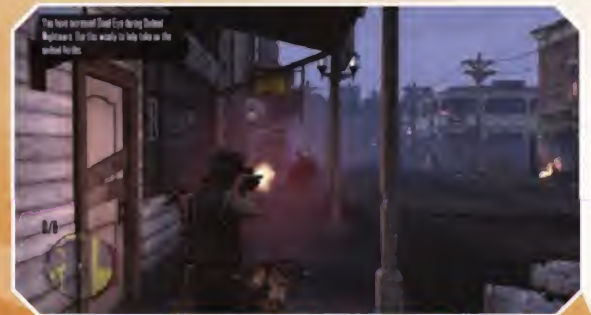
RED DEAD REDEMPTION: UNDEAD NIGHTMARE

The 360 version has more blood and more grass on the ground. How can we fully immerse ourselves if there's no grass on the ground to sell us on the illusion of being in the Wild West? But wait... tiny loading screens dotted throughout on 360, compared to the smooth performance on PS3? Immersion is broken on both versions! That's not true, of course. It's an immersive game. You'll feel like you're there. Only difference is on PS3, you'll be wondering where the grass is

PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360

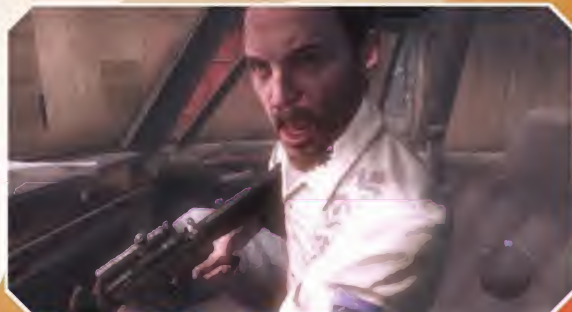




CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

When you get in the car at the start and Impersonal Man Who Only Exists To Shout The Controls At You Via In-Game Objectives shouts to reverse, you'll notice his beard is slightly blockier on Xbox 360. PS3 version is superior! And it all comes down to a scruffy beard. But... the glass shattering looks better on Xbox 360 you say? Sigh. Back to square one. Which is moaning that the multiplayer is broken and Treyarch sucks and *COD 4* was the best. Or something.

PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360

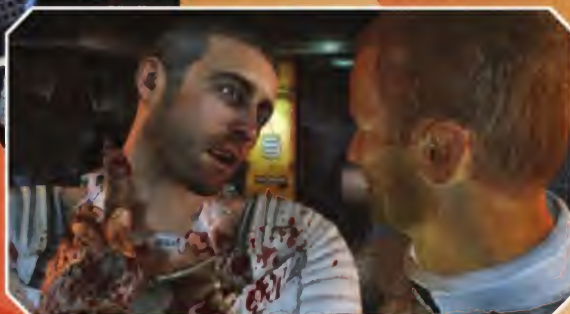




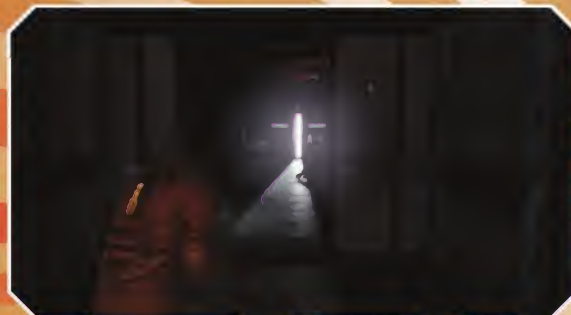
DEAD SPACE 2

There are no differences between either version. None. Wait! Look at the textures on his... oh. The screen was dirty. Never mind. So, *Dead Space 2*. They make different noises when the disc is in the machine, PS3 having a comical stop-start staccato whirring compared to 360's relentless and impersonal disc spinning. Xbox 360 does seem to heat up the room faster than PS3 when playing *Dead Space 2*, though, which is useful for cutting down on those pesky energy bills.

PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360

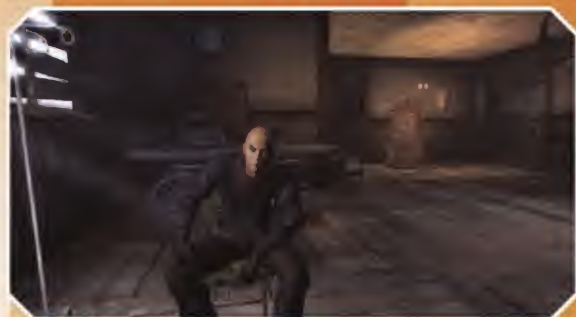




FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

The PS3 version is a bit more detailed and... that's it. The 360 version had a Goodsprings settler walk into a wall, stare at the wall and then walk off but that's hardly going to break the console wars. Or maybe it will! If superior beards or different lighting can cause internet forums to melt with fury at being saddled with a sub-par port, maybe a dozy *Fallout* settler can, too. Or maybe comparing games is pointless given both sets of owners on both consoles will play them anyway? Gasp!

PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360



CONCLUSION WINNER: NEITHER

Some games are better on PlayStation 3, some games are better on Xbox 360. Who knew? Even when they're different, they're just different. Not better. *Different*. Internet forums lead to overblown melodrama on missing frames or something just as nonsensical but by and large, games will be equal on both platforms. So stop panicking and enjoy *LittleBigPlanet 2*.

HEAVEN AND HELL

The Resident Evil series may be gaming's most famous horror franchise, but it's Silent Hill that's more likely to lead to a surge in the sales of nightlights and adult Pampers among its players. How? By being the most unsettling experience since your mum got a Facebook account. Join us as we show you how the series has mixed gaming heaven with its own hellacious twist on horror...

THE GAMES HAVE STORIES THAT ARE ACTUALLY MATURE

IT'S WELL KNOWN in the games industry that most titles claiming to convey 'adult' stories actually do anything but. An 18-rating on a box is seemingly shorthand for 'this game contains tits and bad language, neither of which adds anything apart from the vague and embittering sense that we're treating our players like children.' You can see why they shortened it.

Silent Hill, on the other hand, deals with subjects as broad as euthanasia, child abuse and the breakdown of the family unit. Heavy stuff, but instead of ramming these narrative horrors down players' throats, they creep up quietly. The plots unspool with the demented logic of the worst nightmares, cranking up 'the nameless dread' expertly in the process.

IT HAS SOME OF GAMING'S BEST MUSIC

SOUND DESIGN IS the red-haired stepchild of videogame development: something to let you know that you've picked up more ammo for your ColdWar 9000 while you stare at the pretty graphics, right? Not in *Silent Hill* it's not. It's no exaggeration to say that veteran series composer Akira Yamaoka's works define the experience: playing the game with the sound turned off is about as scary as reading *The Beano* in a pair of freshly ironed pyjamas, while D:Ream's *Things Can Only Get Better* plays softly in the background.

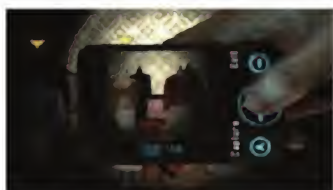
Like *The Godfather's Love Theme*, *Jaws's* 'dun-dun' or the Chuckle Brothers' 'ChuckleVison', Yamaoka's works are integral to the piece, deepening and enriching everything they accompany. The fact that he won't be scoring the upcoming *Silent Hill* gives us The Fear.

WHAT SILENT HILL: DOWNPOUR NEEDS TO DO...



BE DIFFERENT

The water environment in *Downpour* should change things up significantly from the old formula. Hopefully, Konami won't get complacent and will use this to drive real change.



MORE PUZZLES

Strong puzzles should always be a staple of *Silent Hill*, just like sudoku is the staple of a *Daily Mail* reader's commute. Force us to scramble to GameFAQs in desperation please Konami.



GOOD VOICE ACTING

We've come a long way since the days of Eddie grumbling about pizza in *Silent Hill 2*, as strong voice acting is now seen as an integral part of plot-led games. Let's keep the standards high.



STRONG CAST

Remember creepy Laura from *Silent Hill 2*? Neighbourly Eileen in *Silent Hill: The Room*? Having interesting characters makes the game that much better, as you want to learn about them.



INTERESTING COMBAT

Not necessarily 'you can only use melee LOL' style gimmicks. We're after something that makes combat a talking point. Dramatic. Fun. Scary. Something between fight or flee, perhaps?

IT'S PROPERLY SCARY

MOST DEVS THINK the key to 'horror' is striking violins and monsters jumping out at players. This may work the first time, but eventually you'll greet it with all the resigned inevitability of the unemployed watching *Neighbours* twice in one day.

Silent Hill's horror isn't so obvious. Much like the movie *Alien*, the environment is a central character: an extension of the main character's psychological state, the town shapeshifts to represent the character's deepest fears, conjuring deeply personal enemies from the purgatory of the town's ever-present fog. It's actually quite difficult to die in *Silent Hill* (and PS2 and PSP entry *Shattered Memories* features no combat at all), but the terror here is that the enemy is within: finding out that it was actually you, and not some alien or monster, that mercy-killed your wife in *Silent Hill 2's* climax is as terrifying as it comes.



HEAVEN AND HELL



IT DARES TO BE DIFFERENT

LET'S FACE IT: most videogame series' plots are a load of bonkers nonsense, rinsed and repeated with each new sequel while changes are made to the important things.

But with the town of *Silent Hill* being an intimate and ever-changing reflection of its protagonists, each game has room to tell a rather different tale from the last. *Silent Hill's* 'heroes' are teenagers and everymen, fathers and daughters. So that's why *Silent Hill 2* follows up the original game's story of a religious sect and evil children with the very personal crisis of the death of a loved one. It's also the reason why *Silent Hill Homecoming* could be about the perils of returning from war, despite the previous title being about a man trapped in his apartment like some demented version of *Friends* or something.

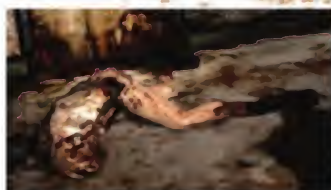
YOU CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY

KEY TO THE appeal of the series is the fact that Konami wants you to choose how the story ends. Cleverly, it doesn't do this by simply giving players branching pathways. Instead, subtle choices will add up over time and define your outcome, leading to endings with characters escaping the town alive or killing themselves. In *Shattered Memories*, depending on how you answer the psychologist's questions in the therapy sessions, the game will change around you. It adds great replay value, especially if you want the ending where a small dog is controlling events. Seriously.



THE ENDINGS ARE MEMORABLE

IT MAY NOT shift the same amount of units as its rivals, but the *Silent Hill* series is still one of the most imaginative and engaging in videogames. Not every game in the series is a classic but they're always *interesting*. That's especially evident in the endings, with *Silent Hill 2* being the perfect example. Depending on how much time players make protagonist James Sunderland spend with his wife's sexy doppelgänger Maria, it's possible that you'll get the ending where you euthanise your sick wife out of a mixture of sexual frustration and mercy. Walking off with Maria to start a new life, she begins coughing before shrugging it off, intimating that Maria has the same illness and that James will have to repeat the nightmare again and again.



HUMAN MONSTERS

Early monsters were vaguely based on humans, making them eerily familiar, leaving you feeling uncomfortable. Better than a screaming blob with 300 teeth and four arseholes. Or not.



ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

Walking about hitting ⊗ and reading your character's thoughts can seem unimportant until you realise how bland environments feel without it.



TALKING POINTS

The endings for *Silent Hill 2*. The massive Eileen head in *The Room*. The psychologist profiling in *Shattered Memories*. *Silent Hill: Downpour* needs at least one talking point to excite fans.



ICONIC MONSTER

Almost the same as human monsters, we know, but think of how Pyramid Head and the nurses have stood tall as iconic characters. Even the janitor from the *Silent Hill* movie pulled it off.



DON'T COPY TRENDS

Please. No co-op gameplay. No tacked-on multiplayer modes. No hiding characters or levels away for DLC. No tacky special editions. Please. PLEASE. Konami, seriously. Please.

HINDSIGHT IS 20/20

"This game will revolutionise the genre" – so why did it end up getting a kicking in Play? Looking back at pre-release interviews for games that didn't quite live up to our expectations, there's a clear pattern: hype, hope and a bit more hype. It's time to go over the records and see what we've learned



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

"I feel that these days, people have difficulty feeling joy and excitement in their daily lives. One of my plans is to let people feel that excitement and joy through this game." – Shun Nakamura, director (*PlayStation Next3 01*)

We definitely experienced joy and excitement with *Sonic*. On one hand we had the memory of joy, something we remembered from before playing the game. On the other we had excitement, which came when we remembered we could just turn it off. And never play it again. And burn the disc.

52%



LAIR

"The Sixaxis and motion control in general was amazing. It really pushed the game forward a lot for us. It gave the physical dragon combat the visceral feeling it needed so much. Plus, it's a nice workout on top!" – Julian Eggebrecht, co-founder/president Factor 5 (*Play 154*)

We're not going to rip on Eggebrecht's sentence in the middle there, as English isn't his first language. But honestly, what tripe. Just like *Lair* then, really. And the controls were simply not good enough and proved detrimental to the game.

52%



MORTAL KOMBAT VS DC UNIVERSE

"You can't be the best beat-'em-up of all time unless you take on *Street Fighter* – I think we have a really good chance. Hopefully gamers will see something in our game that they don't see in their game, and *Street Fighter* fans will probably see something in their game that they don't in ours."

– Hector Sanchez, associate producer, Warner Bros Games (*Play 171*)

We'd like to add to this statement: you can't be the best beat-'em-up ever if you're only a serviceable, unspectacular and dull fighting game. As for what we saw in *Street Fighter* that wasn't in *MK Vs DC*? Lots of fun and even less crowbarred-in characters. On the flip side, *MK Vs DC* did have Superman, and... actually, no. Superman is rubbish.

68%





ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

"We were very conscious of the criticism [of the first game], took it on board and were sure to, if not fix everything, at least adjust it in a sense, make it more defined and explain it."

– Matt Turner, producer, EA Montreal (Play 186)

EA Montreal may well have taken on board the criticisms of the first game, but it seems its claims to have actually addressed them were... a bit far-fetched, shall we say. Rather than a more focused and generally *better* approach to the sequel, we got more of the same boredom-inducing tosh.

65%

TNA IMPACT!

"We came up with a list of games, everywhere from the *Fire Pro* series to *Gladiator* to some of the original THQ games with the AKI engine. We said, 'these are the things we like out of these games' and Midway kinda built its gameplay off of that." – Samoa Joe, wrestler, TNA (Play 169)

Samoa Joe is a big guy, so why Midway ended up not listening to his suggestions we really do not know – he could kill them all with his little finger, we're sure. While the Samoan Submission Machine's knowledge of great wrestling games is admirable, it seems his ability to actually tell Midway to 'make a great game' is lacking. Sorry, Joe – please don't kill us.

71%

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"The game's pretty gritty. Fortunately, I think the message that was pretty consistent both internally and at Activision was, as long as you're doing it well, keep following your vision... We're not trying to be controversial, we're just making our game." Mark Lamia, studio head, Treyarch (Play 167)

Spinning coffins of dead soldiers turning into the stars of the US flag. Spinning coffins of dead soldiers turning into the stars of the US flag. Plus lots of needless violence. *World At War* was many things, but one thing it certainly was not was 'done well'.

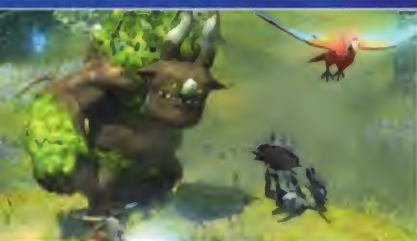
68%

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

"[People] played *Prince Of Persia* originally and then switched to *GOW* or *Uncharted*. What we have to do now is hook them back into *POP* and get a few of them back and hopefully gain a new audience through things like the film." – Jan-Erik Sjoval, animation director, Ubisoft Montreal (Play 192)

Note Sjoval mentioned the film and not the game, even though he was talking about the latter. It's almost as if he knew right then that *The Forgotten Sands* would simply end up as the *Forgotten Sequel*, mired as it was in utter mediocrity. It's a noble cause to want to win back your lapsed fans, but you have to release a game (and film) that's actually good to justify them coming back. Just a hint, there.

68%



MAJIN AND THE FORSAKEN KINGDOM

"The team was surprised that the only games that seem to make it on next-gen consoles were shooters, racing games and fighting games... We wanted to make a game for core gamers, so we had to bring it to PS3 and Xbox 360 and offer something different to those gamers." – Karine Balichard, producer, Namco Bandai (Play 196)

Fine and noble sentiments that we were wholeheartedly behind pre-launch. Then *Majin* arrived and we realised that it was all a bit pretty-much-the-same as lots of other third-person adventuring titles we've seen in recent years.

72%



DYNASTY WARRIORS 6

"A big feature we've included is the Renbu system; it's a system based on the player's skill, and it enables you to chain your combo to an infinite level. To try to get over the criticism of repetitive button mashing, we integrated this new gameplay system into *Dynasty Warriors 6*." – Kenichi Matsumoto, product manager, Koei (Play 161)

To say *Dynasty Warriors* would 'get over' button mashing criticism? We knew that was ridiculous before we even had to play this tripe.

30%



KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

"You are spending energy on figuring these guys out because it's not served to you in a classic way, like, he's a bit of a criminal but he's really a good guy because he does all these good things. We push it a bit further, we take it somewhere else. A lot of the things they do are questionable. We make them cool and interesting enough, so you think there's something here to pursue with these characters." – Hakan Abrak, producer, IO Interactive (Play 188)

Hands up who remembers the three-or-so hours of story they got out of *K&L 2*. No one? Far from doing anything like giving a crap about the two protagonists, IO's story either passed us by entirely or left us cold. For all the pre-release hype about *Dog Days* having a deep, involving and *real* story behind it, it turned out to be absolutely nothing of the sort, at all. There is nothing to 'pursue' with these characters.

71%



BIONIC COMMANDO

"We want to make players open their minds, because we believe that the new-gen isn't just about better graphics. But the gaming has to step up and go into a new direction. If we don't do that, we'll go out of business." – Ulf Andersson, co-founder, GRIN (Play 170)

See, we actually liked *Bionic Commando* and really did think it brought some interesting ideas to the table. It wasn't one for everyone, mind, but it probably deserved to do a bit better than it did. It at least deserved to not be part of the death throes of GRIN, which did end up going out of business. Ah, prophetic.

82%



ALONE IN THE DARK

"I really respect what they've done in *Resi 4*, but having a rocket launcher fire at a boss then leave not even a scratch, this is something I don't want... So there will be a lot of [environmental combat] elements and we think this is better than shooting everything." – David Nadal, game director (Play 144)

So it wasn't directly badmouthing *Resi 4*, but it was questioning its approach – after all, what's fun about shooting things? Setting chairs on fire proved to be a far more preferable way to do things. Didn't it? No? Oh.

70%



PLAYSTATION HOME

"We have high ambitions for Home, but we've also had discussions with third parties and the response has been enthusiastic. There are a lot of questions still to be answered about how it will work, but the indications are that people want to be involved." – Pete Edwards, executive producer (games™ 58)

The response to Home has been enthusiastic from those wanting to sell things. But what about the *people*? It's a bit of a consumerist wasteland in there, and while corporations may have wanted to get involved, the gaming public certainly didn't.

N/A%



ASSASSIN'S CREED

"Previous action/adventure standards are abolished and the player is given the freedom to experience this adventure in a manner that fits their individual play style. Thus, this concept influences all levels of the game – story, structure and design. It's all incredibly exciting!" – *Corey May, script writer (Play 152)*

This statement turned out to be pretty accurate, at least to a point. In fact, it's easy to pinpoint exactly where it strayed into rampant hyperbole. Here's a clue: it's the part where May claimed the game to be 'incredibly exciting.'

58%

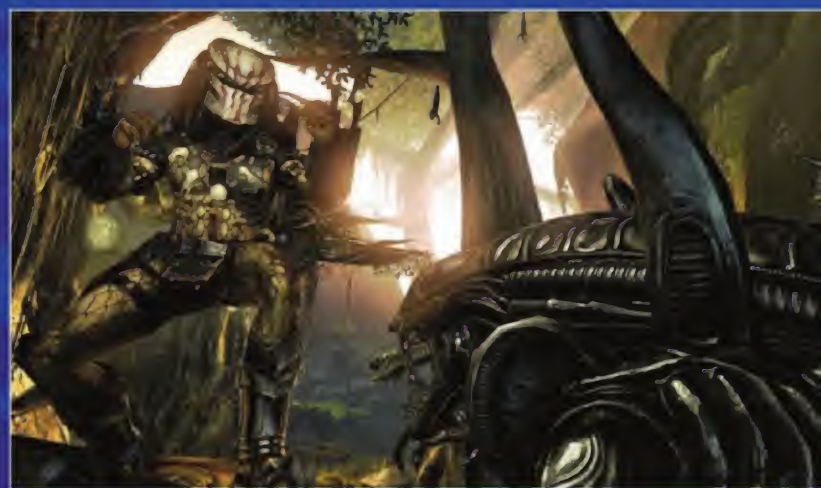


HAZE

"The first thing was the story. We wanted something that's about these guys who are seeing the world as a videogame, and then being shown that it's not a videogame. The great thing about that concept is, of course, it immediately leads to a particular type of gameplay, and so it was lucky that the two things were very cohesive." – *Rob Yescombe, writer (games™ 65)*

That's all *Haze* ever was – a great concept. Actually, it was a decent concept carried out in such a lacklustre way it would be hilarious if it weren't so dull. That must be the 'particular type of gameplay' referred to: the painfully middling kind.

64%



ALIENS VS PREDATOR

"What's great is all the people who have played it who have also enjoyed such fabulous games as *Call Of Duty* and *Halo* and all the rest, are looking at *AVP* and saying, 'in the same sense, that's got a hook that interests me.'" – *Dave Brickley, senior producer, Rebellion (Play 186)*

We're not about to say the people putting *Aliens Vs Predator* on a par with *Halo* and *COD* had wrong opinions, but... well, they did, didn't they? Rebellion's FPS had some interesting ideas and wasn't terrible, but it was nowhere near the levels of console royalty the devs tried to talk it up to.

79%

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

"We've listened to feedback and addressed the problems such as the targeting system, but we've also layered on what we did well first time around. We listened to what people liked and have given them more of it this time. The Force powers, for example, I think we did that very well so now they are amped up, so too with the melee combat. You also have the two Lightsabers, which makes for more dynamic combat." – *Brett Rector, producer, LucasArts (Play 196)*

We still hurt from this one – we really thought LucasArts would sort out *TFU*'s problems and give us the game we wanted. Instead, it presented us with a better-looking, but ultimately worse game than the original. Yes, some elements were fixed, but to claim they listened to feedback when the sequel suffers from many problems identical to the first game... well, it makes us want to weep.

61%

DEAD OR ALIVE PARADISE

"We believe that there are users out there for this kind of game, otherwise we wouldn't have made it. With it being on the PSP we wanted to make it valuable as a PSP game and we are focused on creating a very beautiful game. We're trying to push it to be the most beautiful game that we can make." – *Yoshinori Ueda, director, Tecmo (Play 191)*

From a purely functional perspective, there's nothing wrong with these statements. From a sensible, level-headed and correct perspective, there's something deeply wrong with both statements. A tawdry, dirty little secret of a game that only got more than 25 per cent because Ian liked the gambling. It isn't 'nice' to look at and it isn't the kind of game we're proud there's an audience for.

56%



SPLITTING THE DIFFERENCE

When online gaming exploded, that mainstay of Nineties gaming – the split-screen experience – was somewhat lost amid the excitement. But at Play we believe nothing beats sharing a couch while you battle it out for the top spot. Here are a few titles attempting to keep that social experience alive:



BORDERLANDS

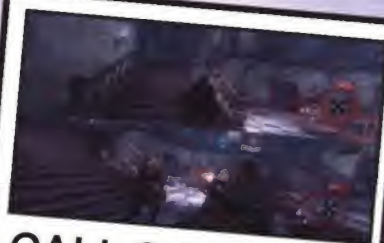
Thankfully, as time goes on, more and more action and FPS games are getting offline co-op as standard. It seems devs finally got the message that not everyone is playing online. The fact that two-player split-screen is included in *Borderlands* means an already great game gets twice as good when you're playing it with a friend. It's just a pity it doesn't offer four-player split-screen, or the ability to play split-screen with two other players online.



BLUR

It's a shame that, for a while there, less and less racing games were bothering with split-screen gaming. Few genres are better suited to split-screen multiplayer, and as such we were glad to see Bizarre Creations embrace the racer's roots. There are loads of modes to choose from in *Blur*'s multiplayer, from standard races to battle modes. With four-player split-screen support included, *Blur* is an exhilarating experience.





CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

All of the recent *Call Of Duty* games have allowed players to enjoy the online experience together thanks to the implementation of split-screen (and the single-player experience in *World At War*'s co-op). Sure, it's more difficult to get a perfect headshot when you're working with a smaller screen, but it's more fun being able to laugh right in your friend's face when you stick them with Semtex.



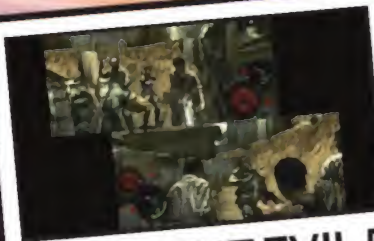
MOTORSTORM: PACIFIC RIFT

We'll be completely honest here. *MotorStorm*'s split-screen option doesn't add a whole lot to the experience, and although the vertical slice allows players to better navigate the verticality of courses, we were left wanting the standard horizontal, panoramic view. Still, we're excited for *MotorStorm: Apocalypse*'s four-player split screen (which can be played online with 12 other players), and the ability to create your own game modes.



MODNATION RACERS

How can you talk about a contemporary karting game without referencing the impact Nintendo's *Mario Kart* had on the genre? *ModNation* takes its cues from Mario's racing titles, and as such any gamer worth their salt would have felt rightfully snubbed had four-player split-screen not been included. Thankfully it is, making *ModNation Racers* a great throwback to the days of our youth.



RESIDENT EVIL 5

While we've seen scarier pillow fights than the 'terror' served up in *Resident Evil 5*, it did at least offer good co-op action thanks to players being split up, having to work together to solve puzzles and teaming up to moan about how it's not as good as *Resi 4*. Interesting fact - Sheva was designed as a left-handed character so she stands on the right side of the screen, avoiding having the players standing underneath each other as a weird rotating pillar.

Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, 3GS, iPod Touch or iPad >>> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >>> an Internet connection



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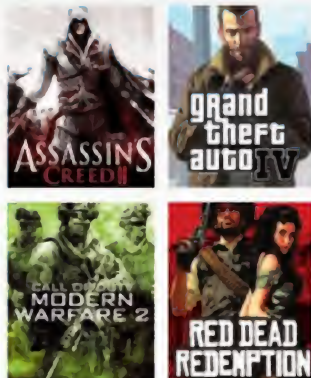
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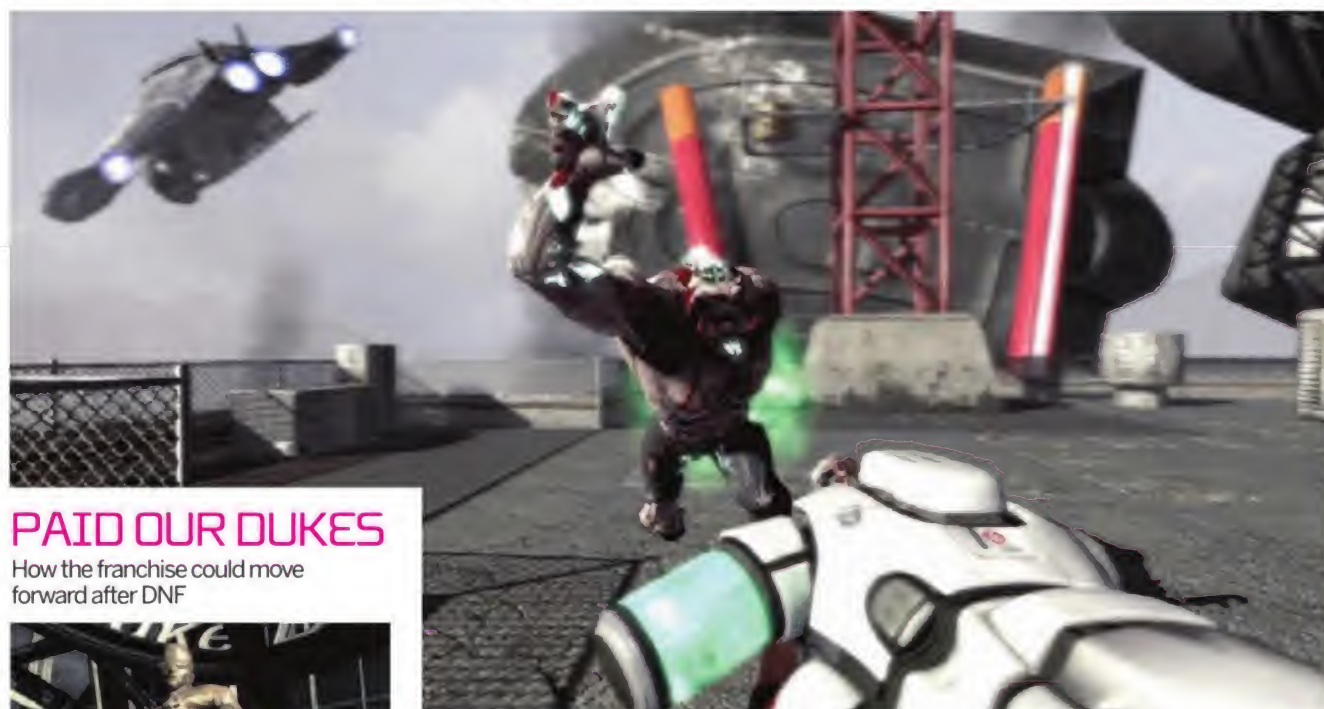


PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



It's kind of unfortunate that a game delayed as long as this has a title like that.



PAID OUR DUKES

How the franchise could move forward after DNF



NOW THAT GEARBOX wholly owns the rights to the *Duke Nukem* IP, *DNF* could be a new start for Duke, providing it doesn't bomb. The studio is obviously keen to gain the support of the fans again, even going as far as permitting a complete fan remake of *Duke Nukem 3D* on the PC – when the studio itself starts to put its own touches on the *Duke Nukem* series, though, that's when things will really get interesting, given what a contrast it is to the studio's previous titles.



Duke Nukem Forever's been on the cards since 1997 – we can wait a little longer.



UPDATE



● Guns and girls are pretty much the only two staples of the *Duke* series.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2011

Duke Nukem Forever

Pushing the boundaries of human patience since 1997



"All gamers deserve a happy ending and after all of us gamers feeling the full range of emotions about *Duke Nukem Forever*, I am thrilled to be in a position with the trust, power and means to make it happen." Those were the words of Gearbox's Randy Pitchford upon the re-announcement of the long-gestating FPS. Bit dramatic, isn't it? The man speaks as if he's just solved a nuclear missile crisis or performed a jig with Dick Cheney. We've never felt any emotion towards *Duke Nukem Forever*, unless 'waiting' counts as an emotion. Which it doesn't.

Your enjoyment of *Duke Nukem Forever* when it releases next year may hinge on your pre-existing experience with the franchise – this is very much a 3D Realms game, with Gearbox only stepping in to stitch it all together. Okay, so the former studio was seemingly working for years without any progress, but according to Pitchford much of *DNF* was coming together when the studio went bust, so the identity of Duke will run through the game. The question here is whether those ideas are enough to be competitive in 2011. Yeah, the game's been through numerous iterations to keep up with these crazy times, but

even if it is completely up to snuff, people will find some way to piss and moan about it being 1997 design in a modern-day skin.

Yet let's face it, gaming is nostalgic. People play *Street Fighter IV* because it's fundamentally similar to something they played as a teenager. So, although we're sure Duke will be in the firing line with critics for being late

fiscally responsible reasons. Plus, there looks to be a real adrenaline rush to the combat: big weapons and big monsters, in classic Duke fashion.

Let's not forget, as easy as it is to be cynical about *Duke Nukem Forever* – and it's a bloody easy target – Gearbox actually knows what it's doing. Even *Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway*, the studio's weakest title, had more than a

There's a lot of gamers who'll enjoy what Duke stands for: unadulterated, monster-slaying and satisfying large-scale FPS nonsense

(because apparently a game owes us more if it's taken longer to develop), it doesn't matter too much. There's a lot of gamers who'll enjoy what Duke stands for: unadulterated, monster-slaying and satisfying large-scale FPS nonsense. This is a character who built his reputation on being a complete dick – we just might have to let it go if his latest vehicle doesn't reinvent the videogame narrative.

It's nice to see a game be irreverent in this decade, though. Alongside aggressive and fast FPS sections will be the bizarre, knowingly daft moments of humour synonymous with the series, usually involving urine or ladies taking their clothes off for

faint whiff of quality and decent ideas about it. And *Borderlands* was brilliant! Here, though, the studio looks set to let Duke do what he does best: saving attractive women from aliens. Getting *Duke Nukem Forever* out will be a feat – maybe the story of how this made it onto store shelves will always be more interesting than the game itself, but there's no reason why the resulting Duke outing, throwback or not, can't put a smile on our faces.

Or, you'll wake up, realise this is all a dream and call your mum, saying, "Mum! I just had the craziest dream that an ex-magician brought *Duke Nukem* back from the dead!" There's a game waiting to be made.



● **BORDERLANDS (2009):** A surprise success after analysts predicted it would fail, *Borderlands* managed to bring the MMO ethos of grinding and chasing weapons that are that little bit better to the FPS genre.



● **HALF-LIFE (2001):** Gearbox didn't develop it, but it was responsible for its port on PS2. The frame rate was choppy but that was the only real compromise. Also included co-op expansion *Decay*.



● **BROTHERS IN ARMS: ROAD TO HILL 30 (2005):** At long last, Gearbox was let loose on console with its own IP. *Brothers In Arms* was a World War II shooter with the emphasis on taking cover and suppressing fire.

Clicking into top Gear

With Duke Nukem Forever's survival now up to the efforts of Triptych Studios and Gearbox, that makes Gearbox CEO Randy Pitchford the man in the know. Here's what he had to say...



What attracted Gearbox to Duke Nukem Forever?

Moving out to Texas in 1996 and joining the *Duke Nukem 3D* team as a designer was my first professional gig in the games industry. In many ways, I feel like Duke is a part of my legacy and that I owe Duke my career. Brian Martel, one of the founders of Gearbox Software, and I actually met

close to the game and the brand, so when Duke was in trouble, we felt we had to do something about it.

What do you think Gearbox could bring to the series?

Gearbox is going to make sure that *Duke Nukem Forever* ships in 2011 and that it's going to be really, really fun.

We get better with everything we do and this experience is teaching us things that are hugely beneficial

at 3D Realms while working together on *Duke Nukem 3D Atomic Edition* and *Plutonium Pak*. Since we founded Gearbox, there are a number of amazing people at the studio that had also worked at 3D Realms and contributed to *Duke Nukem Forever*. Many of us feel very

that you'll play when you play the game is the campaign that was developed by 3D Realms – it's their vision. Everything relevant from the story and experience came from 3D Realms. Gearbox's priority has been to enable efforts to complete and polish that vision and make sure

How complete was the game when you acquired it?

The campaign

it can reach customers on all major platforms as a full-featured triple-A game.

What was the process behind deciding what worked and what didn't?

That's a good question. It was very automatic – we just consumed the content that existed and from that we knew what needed to be done and then we enabled those things to happen.

What stood out as something that immediately needed changing?

There were a few things that deserved changing, but there was so much that was so good. So mostly I would categorise the effort as finishing, not changing.

Do you think Duke Nukem as a character is still as enjoyable today as he was back when the game was first released?



● **HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED (2003):** Charged with the PC port of the Xbox classic, Gearbox again did justice, with the only complaints really stemming from *Halo* being designed with console in mind rather than PC.



● **BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY (2008):** PS3 finally saw its first *Brothers In Arms* action, which attempted to mix the psychological trauma of warfare into the usual gameplay with varied results.



● **HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE (1999):** The first officially published Gearbox game, this was an expansion pack for Valve's FPS classic *Half-Life*. Randy Pitchford was lead designer for *Opposing Force*.



● **BORDERLANDS: CLAPTRAP'S NEW ROBOT REVOLUTION (2010):** *Claptrap's New Robot Revolution* established Gearbox as one of the premier DLC players alongside Bethesda and BioWare.

I think he's better today. Back when *Duke Nukem 3D* came out, he was sort of an amalgamation and exaggeration of the heroes of that time. The idea was... 'What kind of hero takes the best of all of these guys' characters and wraps them all together so that you get a new hero that can pretty much kick all of those other guys' asses.' Out pops Duke Nukem – he can kick anyone's ass and save the world all by himself. Fast-forward to today and you've got a world where all of our heroes out there are emo. There's been a pussification of these heroes – they're all trying to be deep and complex. So in that world, Duke, now, somehow, amazingly, gets to be the fresh and unique hero that stands out among all of these other guys.

Duke Nukem 3D reveled in how over the top it was, from the one-liners to the strippers. Where does such a game fit into today's market?

I don't know about everyone else, but I feel like I really need Duke right

now. I think we all sort of need him to be triumphant – especially given everything that Duke has gone through and what we've all gone through in the world. That I feel that the world is behind Duke is really inspiring to me. I like that kind of story – a triumphant story. I just hope that something else doesn't happen to screw things up and get in the way to once again delay us getting to play the game. I mean, we've waited long enough, right?

Do you think adding more humour to the game is now necessary?

I think the humour in *Duke Nukem Forever* is strong and an important part of the joy we feel when we play. But I

think the humour in Duke is really just an accent on top of solid, fun gameplay and incredible, one-of-a-kind experiences that you just don't get anywhere else.

What elements from the original games did you want to make sure also appeared in *Forever*?

It's hard to imagine playing *Duke Nukem Forever* without being able to have fun with some of the classic weapons, like the shrink ray and the freeze gun and the trip mines and the pipe bombs and the devastator and the... Well, the things that we feel we need to experience a little in order to feel that we're playing a proper *Duke Nukem* game are all there. But *Duke Nukem Forever* is a wholly new

game and new experience. You've never seen anything like it.

Has taking on *Duke Nukem* affected other Gearbox projects?

Yes, for the better. We get better with everything we do and this experience has taught us and is teaching us things that are hugely beneficial. We've always been very animated and excited about our future which does wonders to drive momentum – the fire – in the studio. The acquisition of the *Duke Nukem* franchise and *Duke Nukem Forever* is like dumping petrol on that fire.

Gearbox is putting the finishing touches on *Duke Nukem Forever*. Here's the site: www.gearboxsoftware.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's Duke – a refreshingly ridiculous character when videogames take themselves so seriously these days.
- A demonstration of the game shows Duke drawing a penis on a whiteboard.
- It's looking quite decent visually, but is lacking a bit of detail.
- Let's face it, we're all pretty desperate to play it out of sheer intrigue.

READ ME

Duke Nukem Forever is a first-person shooter starring the Nineties icon, made popular by the excellent (in its day) *Duke Nukem 3D*.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

The roof, the roof,
the roof is on fire

PS3

Three games in, and it's clear *Uncharted 3* doesn't need to offer anything radical to hold the interest of its audience, but then again this is Naughty Dog we're talking about; a studio that seems happy to leap chasms while others take baby steps. Since the game broke cover at last year's VGA awards, members of the studio have revealed that in order to make *Uncharted 3* the best instalment yet, Naughty Dog looked to elements of game design that have been deemed too taxing, or technically impossible by consensus, such as convincing fire and sand effects. This led to large portions of *Drake's Deception* being set in the desert, or if snippets of plot are to be believed, the Rub' al Khali desert in Arabia.

Ever a series to meld fiction with explosive action-flick thrills, *Uncharted 3* does borrow from actual events, specifically the life and times of TE Lawrence, the late British army officer who led an Arab revolution at the turn of the 20th Century. Lawrence documented his search for the ancient city of Iram, otherwise known as The Atlantis of the Sands due to it vanishing without a trace. Drake and his faithful mate Sully are picking up

the trail and seeking out the city for themselves but, as always, they aren't the only ones after the spoils.

It seems that a shadowy order is trying to stop the duo from reaching the city by any means necessary. We've already seen a taste of gameplay since *Uncharted 3* was revealed and it's reminiscent of the cover-based shooting we know and love. However, Naughty Dog isn't just going to give us a collection of locales with enemies and different bits of conveniently placed cover to keep us amused. Instead, you can expect a more ferocious pace and the same sense of urgency that the series delivers so well, but this time cranked up to 11.

We saw evidence of this in the first gameplay trailer last year; with Drake and Sully attempting to escape from a burning French chateaux as members of the villainous order try to raze it to the ground. What follows is a manic scramble to safety, quick bursts of combat and thrilling set pieces. The fire effects look incredible, and the same razor-sharp visuals we've come to expect from Naughty Dog remain present and correct. Gunplay is as slick as ever while Drake is now able to fight multiple enemies at once.

The environment seems organic as it collapses and cracks around the player, proving that Naughty Dog hasn't lost its touch at skilfully disguising set pieces. One striking moment sees Drake tumbling through a crack in the floor and grabbing onto a staircase as the room below is swallowed up by the inferno. Taking seconds to catch his breath, Drake runs up the fragile staircase and continues his gun battle. The pace never lets up for a moment, making *Uncharted 2* seem laboured by comparison.

While we still find ourselves reeling from watching the short, but mind-bending gameplay trailer, we simply can't wait to see the desert stages in action. The promise of collapsible sand that shifts around Drake has us salivating at the possibilities, as well as an improved multiplayer component that the developer has geared towards taking on the likes of *Call Of Duty*. With *Uncharted 3* slated for a November release, we still have much to discover, but we're already confident that this will be Drake's finest expedition to date.

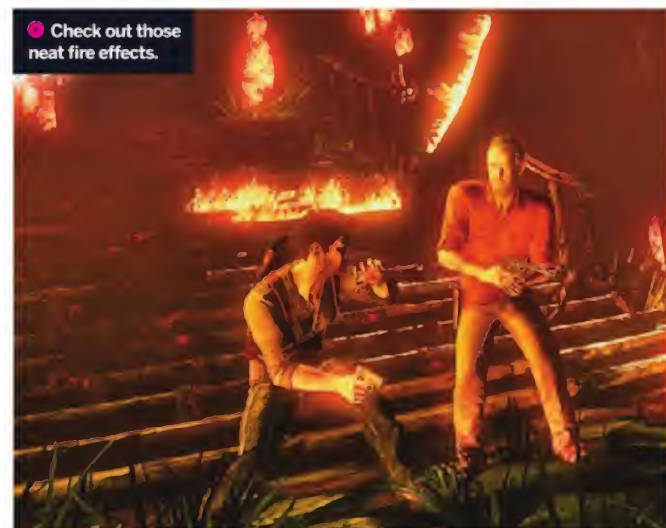
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception is being developed by Naughty Dog. Check the web site for more details: www.unchartedthegame.com



Uncharted never skimps on the greenery.



Drake talks, Sully doesn't understand. Classic.



Check out those neat fire effects.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Uncharted 3 simply has the best fire effects ever seen.
- Collapsible environments promise to offer a wealth of innovation.
- Expect an explosive rollercoaster ride from start to finish.
- Naughty Dog's plans for the multiplayer element will be huge.

READ ME

Naughty Dog built an on-site motion-capture studio for *Uncharted 3* to create the slickest character animation yet.



● Don't look down, you fool. Ah, too late.



● Looks like a dead end to us.



● Desert concepts give an early flavour of what to expect.



● We'll see lots more of Sully this time.



MY FIST, YOUR FACE

Panelling goons, evolved

UNARMED COMBAT WAS never Drake's strong point, and although players could attack and counter enemies with ease in *Uncharted 2*, the whole system felt a tad disjointed. In *Uncharted 3*, Naughty Dog has created a slicker combat mechanic that sees Drake tussling with multiple goons at once. If combat is to succeed, it must be simple to execute, but in-depth at the same time. If it's too simple, some players could feel condescended, but if it's too complex, others will avoid direct conflict. It's a fine tightrope to tread, but the studio should hopefully nail it.



PS3 PS3

PREVIEW



There's a lot more flair and style to *Dragon Age II*'s combat.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Dragon Age II

We are the Champion (of Kirkwall)

PS3 BioWare's bestselling RPG ever and yet still considered by many to be its 'other RPG', *Dragon Age II* seems to have something to prove. That said, it definitely has something to prove to PS3 owners as they got something of the short straw with *Dragon Age: Origins*, but our final look at the game before review has put most of our concerns to rest. It's clear BioWare is getting to grips with the hardware, even if its dark fantasy epic doesn't have the same flash and panache of its space-opera cousin *Mass Effect 2*.

The fact that these two RPGs are from the same developer means that they will always be compared to one another on some level, but it's clear from the early sections of *Dragon Age II* that this is a series of titles that will diverge in dramatic ways from *Mass Effect*. For a start this is not going to be a series of games about a single hero, but more importantly it doesn't necessarily have to be a series of games where it's tied down to one way of doing things. *Mass Effect* is a third-

person shooter RPG, but *Dragon Age* can be anything it wants to be.

The first signs of this come as *Dragon Age II* kicks off in dramatic style. Having chosen Hawke's gender (your main character, who on this occasion has to be human), first name, face and class (Mage, Warrior or Rogue) you are thrown into a battle against the Blight. You will be fighting alongside your brother or sister depending on your opening choices, giving you a chance to play around with your power wheel and commands. Hawke is more or less fully powered up in this opening, possessing preset abilities or spells depending on the class you've chosen. Just as things seem to take a turn for the worse a dragon appears and interrupts proceedings, only in turn to be interrupted by a Seeker named Cassandra whose appearance reveals you've been playing through a story told by a dwarf named Varric. It's a fine introduction to the framed narrative structure of *Dragon Age II* that BioWare is understandably proud of.

This storytelling device should prove interesting as it will constantly cast doubt over your actions. Did Hawke really do the things that you're doing or is Varric spinning a yarn for Cassandra? The only thing we can know for sure is that Hawke is

and surrounded by their family as they escape the Blight in Lothering.

From here you quickly pick up party members to join your cause and get introduced to the important concept of tactical play and character switching. Playing *Dragon Age II* as Hawke alone

Like the first game you need to take full advantage of the abilities of your team by directly controlling them

the Champion of Kirkwall and that whatever your actions a great war is about to descend upon the world. The ultimate aims of Cassandra and Varric must remain a mystery for the time being, but with the dwarf set straight by his interrogator we return to Hawke earlier in his or her life, less powerful

seems like a risky policy. Much like the first game you need to take full advantage of the abilities of your team by directly controlling them and setting them orders. Unlike a shooter like *Mass Effect* there's no hiding from the enemy behind cover. Warriors need to get in enemies' faces, Mages need to heal and

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- An interesting new way to tell a story from the masters of the art.
- The same detailed and layered combat system, only this time more responsive.
- Great new characters and a fully voiced hero give the game more personality.
- *Dragon Age* is only going to get bigger and bigger from here on.



● Making good use of your squad's abilities is the key to victory.

● We're big fans of the Mage's abilities and recommend taking time to learn this class.



UPDATE

● With much more responsive combat comes even more enemies to use it on.



A MAGE'S LIFE

Play's preferred class

WE DON'T USUALLY call out a particular class of character this early as the one we believe is the best in an RPG, but we found the Mage to be particularly good in *Dragon Age II*. It's not just the range of magic, but also the strength of melee attacks that makes this a fine class to kick things off with. Normally we would recommend the Warrior as a starting class, but this time it's a much tougher decision. Do some research and find out which style you think you'll prefer before jumping in.

throw projectiles and Rogues need to get in-between the cracks.

While fans of the original game may have begun to fear that *Dragon Age II* was going down the route of aping *Mass Effect*, with its fixed hero and more focused story, we have no such fears now. It is remaining true to the core gameplay of *Origins* even if it's trying to broaden out the world with a new story and a new set of characters. *Dragon Age* is a world that can support more than one tale at a time in BioWare's mind and based on our latest evidence we're not going to argue with that conclusion.

Dragon Age II has been developed by BioWare, masters of the western RPG. You can find out more at dragonage.bioware.com/da2

READ ME

Development on *Dragon Age II* started even before *Dragon Age: Origins* had been released as BioWare knew what it wanted to improve already.



● If you're the last one standing in a battle, chances are you won't last much longer.

PREVIEW



TOMB RAIDER LEGEND

We say: The fresh start the series needed, it made Lara feel fresh and relevant again thanks to physics-based puzzles and light, responsive controls.

Darrell says: "Tomb Raider Legend on the PlayStation 2 was the game that defined the modern era of Tomb Raider. It brought the series staples back to the forefront and offered a modern mix of great physics puzzles, action and combat. When we were developing it there was a huge emphasis on a number of staple Tomb Raider pillars, such as character movement and fluidity, game narrative and pacing, and of course you can't leave out exotic and awe-inspiring locations."



● Crystal Dynamics' first Tomb Raider game, *Legend* was a much-needed breath of fresh air for the series.

TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD

We say: It's an enticingly open action-adventure game with a seriously sexy lead. We actually said this in our review in issue 173. Honest. Go look.

Darrell says: "Tomb Raider Underworld was the first Tomb Raider built from the ground up for PS3. It represents a great blend of the action pacing of *Legend* combined with the epic set piece puzzling of *Tomb Raider Anniversary*. It's built to showcase the PS3 hardware and is memorable because of the stunning visuals and set pieces. It also concludes the story arc of all three games and provides closure and answers to some of the lifelong questions that Lara has had."



TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY

We say: Turning out better than anyone dared to hope, it contains the same intrigue and mystery that made the original a classic.

Darrell says: "The original *Tomb Raider* was a classic in its day, but hardware had moved on 15 years. *Anniversary* is great because it takes the blueprint from the original and gives it a modern makeover using all the technology and techniques we learned from *Legend*. It was all about mind-bending multi-staged puzzles. They are definitely some of the most memorable puzzles ever created! We felt this was a perfect way to experience the original re-imagined with fluid movement, modern combat and cinematic storytelling."

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011



The Tomb Raider Trilogy

Crystal Dynamics' Darrell Gallagher talks about the Tomb Raider bundle



What was the thinking behind bringing these Tomb Raider games to PlayStation 3?

When Crystal began working on the *Tomb Raider* franchise back in 2004 we originally set out to create a trilogy story. This trilogy, which spanned *Tomb Raider Legend*, *Anniversary*, and *Underworld*, was released on both the PS2 (*Legend/ Anniversary*) and the PS3 (*Underworld*). After all these years we thought, hell, let's give the PS3 owners an opportunity to play the first two games in the trilogy. We thought it would be a great idea to put the total 30 hours of *Tomb Raider* action and adventure remastered in one ultimate Blu-ray collection for the PlayStation 3.

How has Lara developed throughout the three games?

From a character arc standpoint she learns about her past and gets to resolve open questions she's had since her childhood. She matures through

the three titles and has to confront her demons. It's also interesting to see her develop visually across the three games as the hardware and techniques for character development in videogames improves. Despite the improvements in hardware Lara still managed to maintain a consistency to the original and blend stylisation with more photorealistic rendering.

Looking back, are there any development memories from that time that stand out? Any interesting behind-the-scenes stories that you remember?

I was playing through a development build of *Tomb Raider Trilogy* in the studio this week in a common area. Within a few minutes there was a crowd of developers behind me looking at it, too, all talking about the parts they had worked on, reminiscing about their favourite parts of each game and swapping stories about some of the development hell that they went

through on each project. One of the designers who created St Francis' Folly in *Anniversary* tried to play through it and got completely turned around by his own puzzles!

Some other good memories for me were working with Toby Gard for the first time. When I came into the studio his reputation was almost intimidating. He turned out to be great to work with and a really down-to-earth guy. Another good memory was after *Anniversary* we had the live Lara model Karima Adebibe into the studio for a day to hang out. Game development studios are typically crammed full of guys who rarely see the light of day and spend too much time working, playing games and eating pizza. So you can imagine the excitement when a very attractive girl turns up dressed fully in costume. Some good photos were taken that day!

Tomb Raider Trilogy is being touched up by its original creator, Crystal Dynamics. Check out crystald.com for more info.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ It's a high-definition collection of the three most recent Lara outings.
- ❑ Complete with Trophies for each game. Three Platins to collect!
- ❑ Two of these games have never been on PlayStation 3 before!
- ❑ The other one has, however, so we're kind of ignoring that.

READ ME

Tomb Raider: Legend was the first Lara Croft game to appear on a Nintendo home console, via... GameCube. Remember that? With the little handle?



● *Anniversary* featured some of the most memorable and difficult puzzles in the series.



● *Underworld* really shows off PS3's technical capabilities and also shows off a giant kraken. Squid. Thing.

PREVIEW

FIRST LOOK



Downpour hasn't abandoned every *Silent Hill* cliché. Here's your obligatory female cop character.

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Silent Hill: Downpour

Konami's latest rain of terror

Conventional wisdom tells us that the *Silent Hill* series has been in decline for the best part of a decade. This, as it turns out, is nonsense. Only *Homecoming* can be considered a poor game, while last year's *Shattered Memories* would be regarded as one of the best if only anyone had bothered to play it. So let's cast cynicism aside and take an open-minded look at *Downpour*, the eighth *Silent Hill* game to plunge us and one unlucky protagonist into its disturbing netherworld.

That protagonist this time is Murphy Pendleton, a convict who wanders into Silent Hill after an accident on a prison transfer vehicle sets him free. We don't know much more about his background, and rightly so since much of *Silent Hill*'s appeal is in the way the story unravels and reveals more about the psyche and dark past of the character. What we do know, however, is how the town itself will be different from previous games. The developer is intentionally

moving away from familiar locations like the school and hospital, setting the game in a part of Silent Hill only hinted at in previous stories. Water will play an important role, as the title suggests, and will be used both as a visual signature as well as a tool to unnervingly the player, as in one area that features water running along the ceiling like a river.

Reassuringly, the gameplay will echo early *Silent Hill* games and place the player in a relatively powerless position in contrast to other games. It will often be easier to run away from monsters rather than fight them. While weapons, usually objects found lying around, will degrade and break over time. It seems like *Downpour* is aiming to get the *Silent Hill* feel just right, though confirmation that boss encounters will include QTEs sends more chills up our spine than an army of Pyramid Heads. Let's hope they're used in a clever way, eh?

Vatra Games is developing *Downpour*. Visit www.konami.com/games/silenthill/silenthill8 for more info.



God bless HD consoles for giving us thousands of horror games with torches in them.



SIDE SWIPE

Will side quests ruin *Downpour*?

THE *SILENT HILL* series is at its best when eschewing traditional videogame conventions to concentrate on the story and immerse the player in its world. So it's a little worrying that *Downpour* will feature side quests. Unlike other games, however, these side quests will activate depending on the behaviour of the player giving us hope that they'll be used to personalise the horror to suit our own fears.




Yet to be confirmed: Whether this screenshot of Chris McMahon's sex lair will make it into the final game.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?


- It's obviously trying to capture the authentic *Silent Hill* feel.
- But it's also not afraid to experiment with a few new ideas.
- The effects, particularly the world transformations, look incredible.
- Thankfully, this one's not being developed by Double Helix!

READ ME


Downpour is the first *Silent Hill* not to be scored by composer Akira Yamaoka. Instead Daniel Licht, composer on creepy TV series *Dexter* will write the music.



● He's a tad overdressed for the weather. Didn't need the goggles.



● Keep quiet, stay stealthy, then surprise the enemy. Pow!



● Soldiers shoot at anything that moves, even smoke.



● Hopefully realism won't mean boredom this time round.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2011

Operation Flashpoint: Red River

Cry me a river

PS3 In its relentless pursuit of realism, *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* pushed things a little bit too far. Having to run hundreds of miles to a missile silo only to be killed by a single bullet fired by a tiny shuffling dot on the horizon? Yawn. Restarting the mission hundreds of miles away from the action again? Double yawn. Broken multiplayer. glitches galore, no personality? Yawn, yawn, bloody yawn.

Codemasters promises to have addressed all that. Rather than running around the top of grassy hillsides, you are now dropped in the domed valleys in Tajikistan. That moves away from *Dragon Rising's* endless running about and allows for a more focused experience, as you go toe-to-toe with insurgents and the Chinese PLA. Insurgents

are cannon fodder for your team, using crude tactics and weaponry. Roughly translated, that means they'll be the only enemies you face for the first three levels. Chinese PLA can call upon modern weaponry and choppers and the like, so their appearance will no doubt signify, 'hey, the difficulty level is increasing, so start taking cover dumbass'. Except in more sanitised, tutorial-friendly language. We presume.

There are also promises the criticisms that *Dragon Rising* was stung with have been addressed. Gunplay has been beefed up while your faceless AI companions sport distinct looks and personalities, in an attempt to make you care and not shrug when fall over and don't get back up again. Prepare to cry tears of sorrow, sobbing man-heap!

As with *Dragon Rising*, there's a steady progression in place for your character, although it has been streamlined. By accruing gaming XP, you can unlock new weapons, new equipment, change your class and your loadout. There are challenges for each class and some are only possible when you've unlocked later equipment, so that should be the replayability taken care of. *Dragon Rising* had the basic gameplay in place, it just made some critical errors. Like not being tested properly. And making you run miles to find the game. Solve those two problems and *Red River* will already be on its way to living up to the failed promise of its predecessor...

Codemasters is the studio manning the helm for **Operation Flashpoint: Red River**. Keep up to date on flashpoint-game.com for more info.

DRAGON FAILING

The sins Codemasters should avoid...

TYPING 'DRAGON RISING bugs glitches' into YouTube brings up more search results than if you entered John Smith into Facebook, so we're really hoping Codemasters gives its QA department a proper kick up the bum this time. That goes double for multiplayer. Release with broken single-player, you can patch it up and people will return. Release with broken multiplayer and players rarely give it a second shot. You have been warned, Codemasters.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

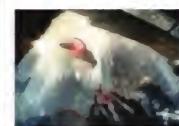
- Genuinely unique and different in a market flooded with me-too first-person shooters.
- Focuses on realism while keeping things accessible and interesting.
- Takes place in wide-open terrain that lets you go pretty much anywhere you want.
- Hopefully not as crippled with bugs as *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* was. Ouch.

READ ME

Sequel to *Dragon Rising* that puts the emphasis on realism as your small squad of soldiers carry out military operations.

EYE TO EYE

A true visionary




THE NANOSUIT HAS different vision modes to help you out on the battlefield. The tactical visor gives you information about various objects and vantage points as well as allowing you to tag enemies. You can also use a kind of heat vision in dark areas such as a collapsed subway tunnel.

PERK ME UP

Mix and match



YOU CAN ACTUALLY customise your abilities with the Nanosuit by hitting . This brings up your left hand where you can assign various upgrades. You can mix and match these whenever you like in-game, but be warned, it's not a pause screen. Combat appeared to carry on regardless.

STRENGTH OR STEALTH

Choose a style



ARMOUR AND STEALTH are two options available to you in a fight. Both run off the same battery, meaning that using one or the other is only going to be a temporary thing. We found stealth handy for times when we needed to regenerate health and strength good when combined with a shotgun.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Crysis 2

The clothes make the man



Something as simple as a suit may not seem like the most revolutionary thing for an FPS to build upon, but then not all outfits are like the Nanosuit, the key ingredient to making *Crysis* such a unique shooter. The space-age-looking skin really sums up everything that makes *Crysis 2* so extraordinary. It may not strike you as the most original or unique experience, but somehow, like the suit, it manages to feel revolutionary.

The key to all this is Crytek's approach to gameplay and the core feel it is looking for from its flagship game. The abilities of the Nanosuit tie directly into creating an FPS that is as much about being smart and considered in your approach as it is about being fast and accurate. By using all the tools at your disposal you may just survive long enough to be of some use as you repel an alien attack on New York. You need to





consider your terrain, vantage points and the weapons at your disposal.

But as much as this game will make you think, it will also have you feeling. Great FPS games have a feel to them, a weight to their guns and a sense of urgency that makes them so much fun to play. They make you feel every bullet you fire and drive yourself from one encounter to the next. The original *Crysis* was good at this and *Crysis 2* seems even better.

Lots of subtle animations and details make for a superb world that promises to be a joy to shoot the hell out of. We look forward to finding out if all these little details and systems come together to make *Crysis 2* as brilliant as it promises to be. We've been very impressed with everything we've seen so far.

Crytek Frankfurt and Crytek UK have worked jointly making *Crysis 2*'s single-player and multiplayer. There's more info at ea.com/crysis-2

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

-  Stunning visuals whether in HD or in 3D, both of which look superb.
-  All of Crytek's substantial expertise in AI and tactical FPS play at work again.
-  Lots of room to customise your game to your preferred style of play.
-  A true hardcore gamer's FPS finally coming to the PS3 in full form.

DON'T STOP MOVING

Suited and booted



THE NANOSUIT'S STEALTH and strength enhancements allow you to move in and around enemy fire more safely, while it also allows you to jump up great heights to find vantage points and traverse difficult terrain. You can also baseball-slide by running and hitting crouch and you can still fire while doing so.



● Could Federer's agility and power unbalance the game? If the game's to be realistic, he has to be the best.

● Hiring coaches allows you to buff your player's attributes.



● 'Vintage' versions of players can also be selected.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Top Spin 4

Four! No, wait... that's golf isn't it?

PS3

How do you make a tennis game that's an incredibly deep, realistic simulation of the sport, but is also accessible and easy to learn? That's the challenge facing 2K Czech. While *Virtua Tennis* has always occupied the arcade end of the spectrum, requiring little more than an analogue stick and the \times button to play, *Top Spin* is all about stats, strategy and measured play. For that reason, *Top Spin*'s fan base has never blossomed into huge numbers.

It's a tad unfair, because the developers working on *Top Spin* have been making tennis games for ten years and they've become pretty good at it. Indeed, *Top Spin 4* is the culmination of the developers' efforts thus far, adeptly balancing accessibility with complexity. First, they've lessened the number of buttons used on the gamepad, so power or control shots are performed by holding or tapping a face button rather than pressing a shoulder button to modify the shot.

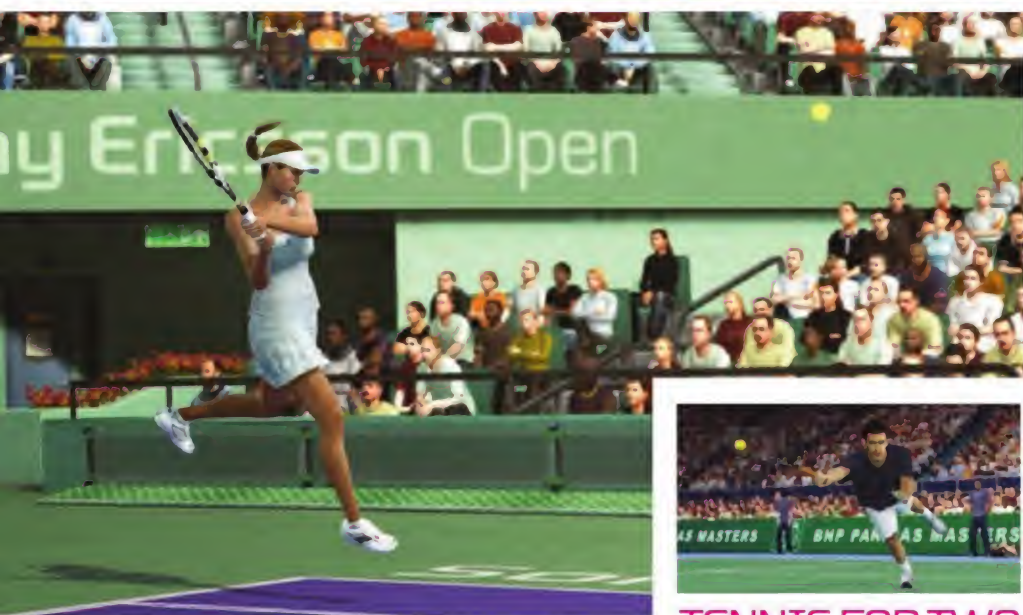
You can also activate helpful assists that appear as you play, such as a timing assist, which reveals if you're hitting the ball too early or too late, and a ball placement assist that reveals where on the court the ball is going to land. A training academy has also been included, meaning *Top Spin 4* gradually teaches players the skills they need to know before throwing them right in the deep end.

2K has done a good job of interweaving these mechanics into

Playing to the strengths of your character is pivotal

the tapestry of the game, meaning you're always learning as you play. And it's great fun. Sure, there are a lot of stats, and the game's not easy; playing to the strengths of your chosen character rather than just thwacking the ball is pivotal. But the core principle of the game remains just as entertaining and simple today as it did in *Pong* back in 1972.

Top Spin 4 is being developed by 2K Czech. Find out more at <http://2ksports.com/games/topspin4>



TENNIS FOR TWO

Promises to be the most realistic simulation of tennis yet

TOP SPIN 4 is more pick-up-and-play than its predecessors, but it's no shallower in its simulation of the sport. Matches played by two opponents can be furious, tactical affairs, where cunning and a good knowledge of your player's statistics are just as important as your ability to place a shot. If you're playing as Andy Roddick, for instance, you know you've got the advantage as soon as you're serving, while Nadal has a devastating forehand.



● The animations are truly top-notch, giving matches a real sense of believability.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

● Multiplayer in tennis games is always fun, and it's no different here.

● There are more than 2,000 mo-capped animations. They're beautiful.

● There's a very light RPG element to be found in the new Coaching system.

● You get to play as Roger Federer. Seriously, that man is superhuman.

READ ME

Tennis originated during the 12th Century in France, and initially involved hitting a ball against a wall with your hands. They must've been very bored.

PREVIEW



● Pain: imminent.



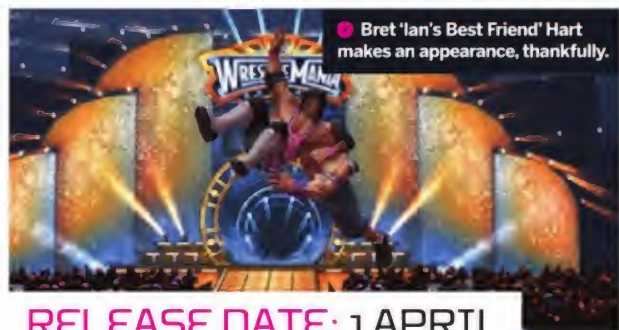
● Triple H looks like a house with Triple H's head on it.



● As you can see, *All Stars* isn't one to dwell on things like realism.



● Bret 'I'm Your Best Friend' Hart makes an appearance, thankfully.



● Cena beating The Rock? With this we are not happy.



RELEASE DATE: 1 APRIL

WWE All Stars

Taking you back to a time when Es were Fs

PS3

If you ask wrestling fans what the sport's golden age was, they'll probably pause, look you up and down and counter with a question of their own: "Golden as in the *best*, or golden as in 'the bit most remembered by more of the populace'?" Rather than bother asking that question, THQ has just gone and included both the golden eras in *WWE All Stars* – the superheroes in brightly coloured tights of the mid-Eighties to early-Nineties and the Attitude era of the late-Nineties/early-Noughties.

We've chatted before about the game and how it is a more arcadey take on a very stale wrestling genre. We've played it before and enjoyed

it – we've played it again and it's still fun. We've also noticed before that it looks ridiculous – but in an intentional way – and it still does. Each character looks to be an action figure, with oversized torsos making way for pin-sized heads all around.

The brawling itself is exactly that – brawling. Elements of strategy and finesse do come into play, with grappling and reversals making appearances. Generally speaking, though, this is a far simplified take on the wrestling genre, harking back to the coin-op titles of old.

The always-important line-up on *All Stars* fills all the elements you would hope, taking in many of the big names from the last 30 years or

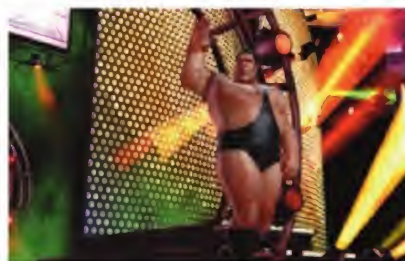
so of the WWE. It's genuinely funny to watch Rey Mysterio going up against Andre The Giant with the exaggerated nature of the game (eg Andre punches Rey, Rey flies ten metres in the air). Then, of course, there's the nostalgia factor.

We still have questions, such as will it have the depth to last players a while? Will movesets have an air of complexity beyond the simple manoeuvres we've been using so far? Will it find itself a place as a genuine alternative to *SVR*? We'll find out soon enough, but we've had fun with what we've played so far.

WWE All Stars is being developed by THQ San Diego. Check out www.wweallstars.com for more details.



● Ryan ended up on the receiving end of a Sharpshooter at the office Christmas party. True story.



WHO ARE YA?

No hiding behind a mask. Unless you
THE VERSION OF *All Stars* we played had more than just the characters shown in these shots available. Unfortunately, owing to licensing restrictions, we're not allowed to say who they are. Safe to say, fans of the legends of the WWF won't be disappointed. Unless they want Bastion Booger.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- As you can see from the screenshots, it looks ridiculous. But in the good way.
- The classic wrestlers on offer are a nostalgic treat.
- What we played seems a fun, silly antithesis to the stale *SmackDown Vs Raw*.
- A different wrestling game is a welcome distraction for fans of the genre.

READ ME

WWE All Stars producer is Sal Divita, ex-Midway chap who played the likes of Nightwolf and Cyrax in the digitised actor-era of *Mortal Kombat*. FINISH HIM.



RELEASE DATE: MAY

Supremacy MMA

Breaking its back to get to the top

PS3 It's good to know that developers aren't turning their backs on MMA just yet after the performance of *EA Sports MMA* and even *UFC Undisputed 2010*. Neither did the business we might have expected, but Kung Fu Factory isn't letting that deter it from what would look very much like a passion project for the team.

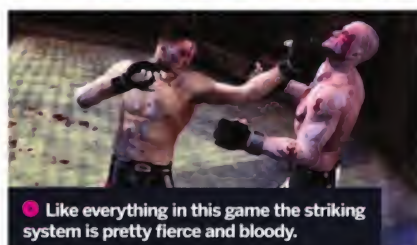
Rather than try to show the polished world that UFC offers or even show us the worldwide nature of organised mixed

marital arts, *Supremacy MMA* is getting down and dirty. It's visiting the dive bars, backyards, trailers, slaughterhouses and dockyards where illegal, unregulated street fighting creates the next generation of hard men. It's not pretty, but it should make for some rather interesting stories.

Kung Fu Factory is drawing from the traditions of the arcade fighter rather than the sim fighter, too, drawing on the over-the-top nature of the world it is exploring to re-create an easy-to-pick-up, combo-friendly and utterly brutal experience. Limbs will be broken, skulls shattered and pints of blood spilled and smeared on the canvas. This may not be pleasant, but it could still be fun.

The developer has named games like *Tekken* as key influences and we can see more than a dash of the old *Def Jam* fighting games in here, too. *Supremacy MMA* is over the top, violent and potentially exactly the kind of fresh thinking this genre is in need of.

Kung Fu Factory is the developer behind *Supremacy MMA*. Keep an eye on www.supremacymma.com for more details.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- From the gutter to a slightly better gutter type stories rather than glitz and glamour.
- Brutal combat that shows exactly how nasty MMA can get outside of the organised fights
- Inspired by the stories of genuine MMA fighters who looked to the sport for redemption.
- A fresh take on mixed martial arts that is much more arcade like and accessible.



RELEASE DATE: TBA

Section 8: Prejudice

Stop! Give this a preview a chance!

PSN Look, we know. Alright? We know exactly what you're thinking. You're thinking that *Section 8* is an Xbox 360 game, which limped onto the shelves last year to no fanfare because it featured ugly robots and uglier FPS gameplay. Right?

You're wrong! Well, maybe not that wrong because none of the above info is incorrect. Rather, you're wrong in cruelly tarring *Section 8: Prejudice* with the same brush. While it's aiming to bring the same full-blooded experience of orbital dropping into a battlefield to shoot ugly robots, it's doing so at a far slimmer PSN download price.

So *Prejudice* could thump its chest and brag about being the biggest game on PSN. Up to 32 players are split into two teams and orbital dropped onto the killing field, before scurrying towards respective hot zones for them to capture. Each one houses an anti-air turret which forces players to consider where they decide to orbital drop before commencing attack. There are upgrades, vehicles and classes.

Imagine it as a small-scale sci-fi *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*, without



the wanton destruction and... you're probably nowhere near the idea of it but at least vaguely thinking in the right terms. Where its predecessor stiffed at retail, *Section 8: Prejudice* is hoping its lighter price will allow it to slip past a similar fate. It'll be interesting to see if people give it a chance on PSN like you did this preview...

TimeGate Factory is the studio hammering *Section 8: Prejudice* together. Check out www.warispredice.com for further info.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a full-price retail release squashed into PSN's dinky confines.
- 32 players skirmishing online in the various multiplayer game modes.
- Buy upgrades, ammo caches and turret guns as you become more powerful.
- Looks like it'll be one of the most ambitious titles available on PSN.



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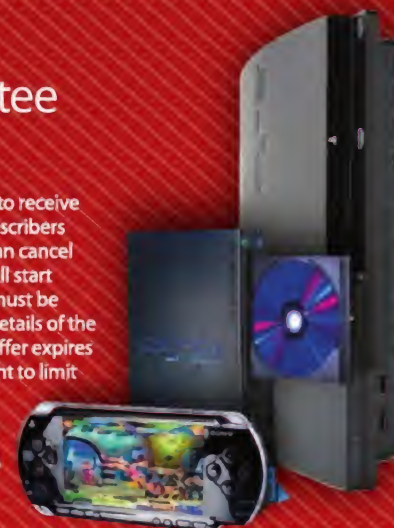
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PLAY. Reviews

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Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Killzone 3 maybe not as good as you thought /// Unlike Marvel Vs Capcom 3 /// Either way, just don't play Mindjack



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Not what you might expect...

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on review



80 Marvel Vs Capcom 3 PS3

When two worlds collide



84 DC Universe Online PS3

A whole universe! In one game!



88 Gods Eater Burst PSP

Better than eating your hat

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review panel



Chris McMahon

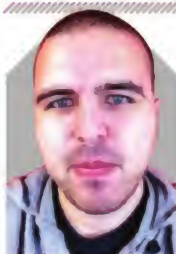
Reviewed: Killzone 3

We asked Chris what he'd been up to and got the usual 'I can't remember' answer. Which we were kind of expecting, as it's what everyone says. So, sneaky

change of plan to get a new answer out of him – if you could make any game in the world, what would you make? "I'd have it so I could do anything in the world, ever. And smash things up. And go round and pester people." Which is brilliant because he actually managed to answer both questions instead of failing to answer one. And he didn't even realise! This is why we pay him the big bucks at **Play**.

currently playing:

Dead Space 2



Ryan King

Reviewed: Marvel Vs Capcom 3

Ryan is something of a fan of this new fad the kids are calling dubbystop. He's also a bit partial to some of what they call drama & base, or something. As such he has a tiny speaker on his desk through which he frequently pumps out some of these sick 'choons', as he calls them, waving his hands in the air while popping Haribo gummy gears. "Listen to the bass wobble on this!" he shouts to a disinterested Chris McMahon next to him, before grinning and waiting for a reaction that never comes. The impact on **Play** has been visible. Or audible. Or depressing.

currently playing:

DC Universe Online



Ben Biggs

Reviewed: DC Universe Online

Monday Morning Coffee In The Corner is a regular event in the Imagine office. We're happy with regular instant coffee but it looks pathetically budget next to the Coffee Granulator Blender Thing that Ben brings with him, showing everyone up. Didn't realise you were so serious about your coffee, Ben. "Serious about coffee?" he roars, throwing his head back and laughing at the sky. Then we all go back to our desks and grumble about how our coffee tastes like paint, even though no one has actually tasted paint. Oh, Monday mornings. Sigh.

currently playing:

Too busy going to parties



Ashley Day

Reviewed: Hyperdimension Neptunia

Here's a man who decided to inflict the worst weekend of all time upon himself. Ash couldn't finish *New Vegas* because his controller 'ran out of batteries' and he couldn't play anything else thanks to a vow not to play new games until *New Vegas* was done. So he spent the entire weekend watching iPlayer until he ran out of things to watch, then... the rest of it is a mystery. "Write nice things about me!" he shouts, following his retelling of that bizarre and awful weekend. So here's something nice about him – he's quite funny. Haha funny, that is.

currently playing:

iPlayer on PlayStation 3

RELEASE DATE: 25 FEBRUARY

Killzone 3

Bullets, blood and beards. What more does a game need? Some substance, it would appear...

PS3 Before we consider the present allow us, for a brief moment, to recall the past; issue 123 of *Play* in particular. It was during that issue that we first reviewed *Killzone*; a much-hyped title that many hoped would surpass *Halo* as the must-have platform-exclusive FPS. Unfortunately, the 2004 shooter didn't live up to the lofty expectations PlayStation fans had set for it.

A few choice quotes from the review: "*Killzone* shuns peripheral tasks – only two or three switches need to be pressed throughout – puzzles are nonexistent. Instead the player's experience is aiming, squeezing the trigger and finding cover."

And another: "The gunfights are extremely tense and atmospheric – and they should be, as this is a game that relies on them for entertainment."

And, finally, one more: "The focus on

firefights means that anyone who doesn't relish the thought of scrapping for territory, yearning for puzzles, switches, or, woe betide, aliens, should look elsewhere."

Now back to the present, and an upsetting revelation: any one of these quotes could easily be applied to *Killzone 3*, a game released some six years after the fact. Naturally, *Killzone 3* is a lot more comprehensive than its forebear, but these criticisms can still be levelled at the core of the experience. This is a game about shooting. And then shooting some more. And then, shock horror, shooting some more again. *Killzone 3* aspires to be little more than a shooting gallery.

Not that there's anything particularly unagreeable about gunning down hordes of Helghast. Starting where *Killzone 2* left off (or, following a brief flash-forward prologue which we won't spoil here) we rejoin the Mohawk-sporting Tomas 'Sev' Sevchenko where we left him: sitting on the steps of Visari Palace and fretting over the impending Helghast onslaught. *Killzone 3* wastes little time launching the player back into the action, with ISA attempting a hasty retreat from the planet before whatever scraps are left of its military are crushed under the heavy Helghast boot.

The combat is as satisfyingly chunky as ever – unlike *Call Of Duty*, in which a few short, deliberate shots are enough to drop an insurgent

like a sack of bricks, the Helghan's padded *Jin-Roh*-inspired armour means they can absorb a magazine of bullets before falling, giving firefights a full, powerful sense of feedback. The AI certainly complements this; it's not necessarily improved over *Killzone 2* but it's certainly no worse, with the Helghast ferociously intelligent, cleverly utilising the space and cover available to them in levels. These aren't enemies that will sit back and take a punch; they'll manoeuvre, flank and reposition themselves in order to give as good as they get.

And they'll get it. *Killzone 3* may be set on another planet, but garrulous purple aliens and guns that fire needles have no place here. This is a shooter about bullets, sweat and muscle. All weapons sport a substantial heft, which is

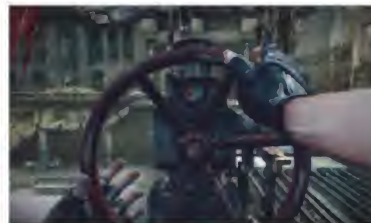
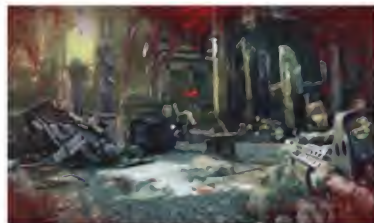
further amplified by the fact that firing them delivers reverberations like a pile driver cracking through concrete. These bullets don't just hit enemies, they pound them into submission. Even when a later level does present a laser-based weapon – one which causes enemies to explode in a thick splotch of dark red blood – the sound of it isn't a mere zap, but of metal screeching against metal and a thumping punch to the gut. Melee kills are similarly visceral, with a press of **R2** close to a Helghast trooper causing

I LIKE TO MOVE IT, MOVE IT

An unexpected twist of events...geddit?

WE NEVER THOUGHT we'd be writing this, but the implementation of Move in *Killzone 3* is rather exceptional. It doesn't feel like an afterthought, but something that's been considered throughout the entire course of development. It's intuitive, cleverly executed, and makes headshots all the more easy to come

by. There are plenty of calibration options to better define your experience with the controller, too, making this a viable alternative to the usual pad setup. Unfortunately we didn't get to experience the game in 3D, but we never got the feeling that it would massively change the experience for the better.



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Guerrilla Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-16
Genre
First-person shooter
Supports
1080i, 720p,
PlayStation
Network,
Downloadable
content, Sixaxis,
Dolby Digital 5.1, 3D,
PlayStation Move
Age Rating
18
Website
www.killzone.com



● A 'hold down the fire button until the enemy dies' section. At least it's really pretty.

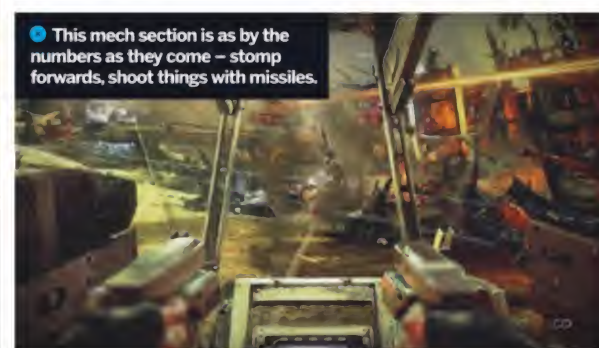


● This guy might as well be named Captain Price, and the level 'All Ghillied Up.'

anything from a slashed throat to popped eye sockets. These animations may repeat a little too often, but they're rarely anything less than a reminder that this war is no joke.

The overarching structure of the game isn't quite as deserving of such praise. *Killzone 3* is, just as its antecedent, unashamedly linear, with no more deviation from the path as there was in *Killzone 2*. It shouldn't be an issue – like *Call Of Duty*, *Killzone* is very adept at camouflaging its linear design with spectacle. It may be taking on the colossal crab-like MAWLK mech with nothing but a rocket launcher; fighting jetpack-equipped jump troopers on Helghan's icy pole; or simply pushing your way through a trench while dodging rocket fire, flame-throwers, grenades and bullets the size of marker pens – there's always enough going on to distract you from the linearity. But whereas *Killzone 2* felt like cleaving a path through indomitable Helghast infantry, *Killzone 3* feels more like being told where to go. The sense of a slow, forward push is replaced by the sensation you're being funnelled.

And the problems don't stop there. *Killzone 3* hasn't shed the issue that plagued its predecessor – its irksome cover system. The cover system remains overly sticky, too clunky and will often get you killed rather than protect you. The Helghast can still shoot you even when you're in cover, making the whole concept rather

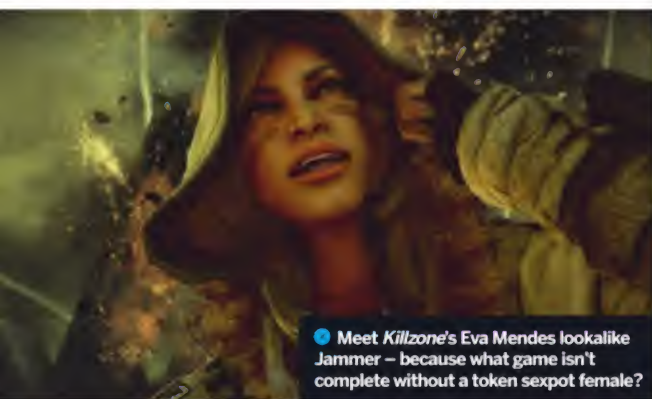


pointless. Improvising cover as in *COD* is a more viable alternative, and we often found ourselves wishing for a prone button to keep Sev flat on the ground and out of immediate danger.

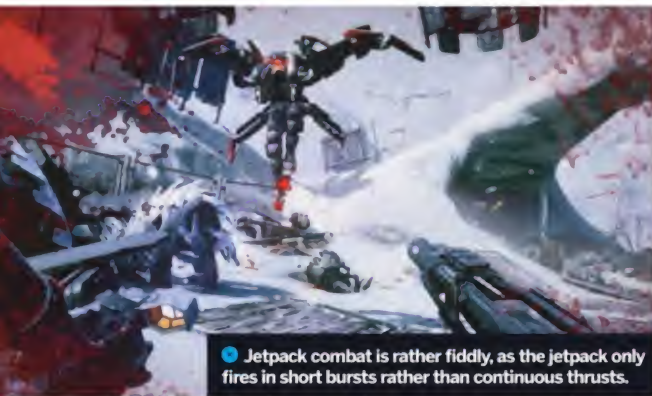
The problem is exacerbated by the fact that in *Killzone* you *need* to use the environment to stay alive; any attempt to go out in the open will get you shot down in seconds. But while Guerrilla is good at making locations, making levels doesn't come as naturally. In the pursuit of creating a believable world, good level design has been somewhat lost, the result being a game that is aesthetically authentic, but doesn't offer the kind of fluid cover-to-cover and moment-to-moment gameplay in its environments that we've come to expect from cover shooters.

We're talking so much about the combat experience because combat – like in both the games that preceded it – is what you're doing 95 per cent of the time spent with *Killzone 3*. You kill, you move forward, you kill some more. There are several attempts to mix up the pacing of the game, but they're short-lived, and don't comprise anything we haven't seen before. There are several vehicle sections – one spent again in the seat of an Exo-Suit; another in an Ice Saw (which resembles a snow tractor with knives for tracks); and another that we won't spoil here – but they're there and gone before you know it, and don't feel as exhilarating as you feel they >





● Meet *Killzone*'s Eva Mendes lookalike Jammer – because what game isn't complete without a token sexpot female?



● Jetpack combat is rather fiddly, as the jetpack only fires in short bursts rather than continuous thrusts.



● Although the cut-scenes are cool, too much story is told through them. Where's the gameplay?



● Expect to see lots of brutal close-up kills. Unfortunately, they're not as varied as we hoped.

➤ should be. Knives for tracks and all you do is steer left and right and fire a few missiles every now and again? It should be better.

There are other deviations, too. One of the more colourful locations you visit looks something akin to *Avatar*'s Pandora had it been designed by Ridley Scott, and it's here you sneak through the undergrowth, silently taking out enemy scouts with a combination of stealth melee kills, suppressed headshots and by shooting bulbous, explosive plants. But even this level, in which you're joined by a bearded partner named Kowalski who comments on your headshots and orders you to "take that one on the right", is extremely reminiscent of another section in another game now three years old. They may as well have called Kowalski 'Captain Price' and been done with it.

At least Guerrilla Games has learned its lesson with boss battles, choosing to abandon them completely following the reaction to those in *Killzone 2* (the battle with the MAWLR is more level disguised as boss fight than actual boss fight). But what replaces them? Nothing. And that's the problem. All you really do is shoot, press the odd button or plant charges.

The problem is that the dust has long since settled on this kind of monotone gameplay. Aircraft turret sections; vehicle sections gone as quickly as they appeared; and a total reliance on cut-scenes when you should be *playing* are old concepts, and each one just makes *Killzone 3* feel all the more archaic. There's something missing here. Something that would make *Killzone 3* truly *special*, rather than just *great*.

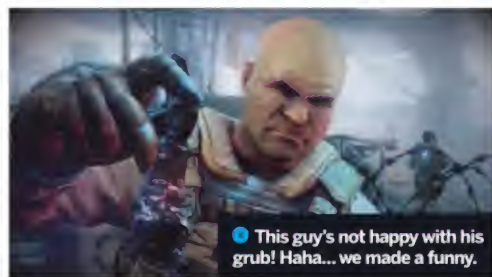
What *Killzone 3* has got going for it is good looks. It's impossible to comment on a *Killzone* game without mentioning how beautiful it is, because in this regard Guerrilla is very much at the top of its game. Whether it's up close or off somewhere in the distance, *Killzone 3* is a

PLODDING PLOT

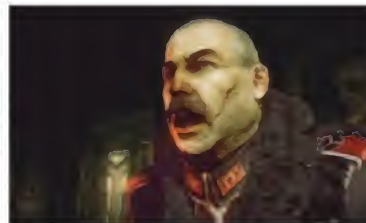
The story is less affecting and more gung-ho than its predecessor

KILLZONE 3'S STORY ISN'T as good as *Killzone 2*'s, and chiefly consists of Rico being given orders and then refusing to carry them out. But there are some good elements to the narrative, like a deeper examination of the Helghan military, namely the infighting between the

hopeful heirs to Visari's throne, Jorhan Stahl and Admiral Orlock (played by Malcolm McDowell and Ray Winstone respectively). We remember Guerrilla saying that *Killzone 3* would have no gratuitous swearing though... but the odd f**k seems to have slipped in.



● This guy's not happy with his grub! Haha... we made a funny.



In this series



Killzone 2 Issue 176

There's not a great deal of difference between this and the third game, although the graphics are perceptibly improved. **93%**



HIT POINTS

There's more than one way to skin a Helghast in Killzone 3



LASER POWERED

This beaut is called the Arc Cannon. Yes, it's a laser, but it's no less powerful than any of Killzone's ballistic weapons.



KILL IT WITH FIRE

Blow up nearby canisters and you'll commonly see the Helghast burst into flames... or shocked with electricity, depending on the canister.



DEATH FROM ABOVE

Thanks to the machine gun-mounted jetpack you can now shoot enemies from anywhere – from above, from the side, or even in the legs from below.



HEADACHE

The melee kills come in many different flavours. You'll slash throats, knock heads, twist knives in eyes, and even pop eye sockets with your thumbs. Nice.



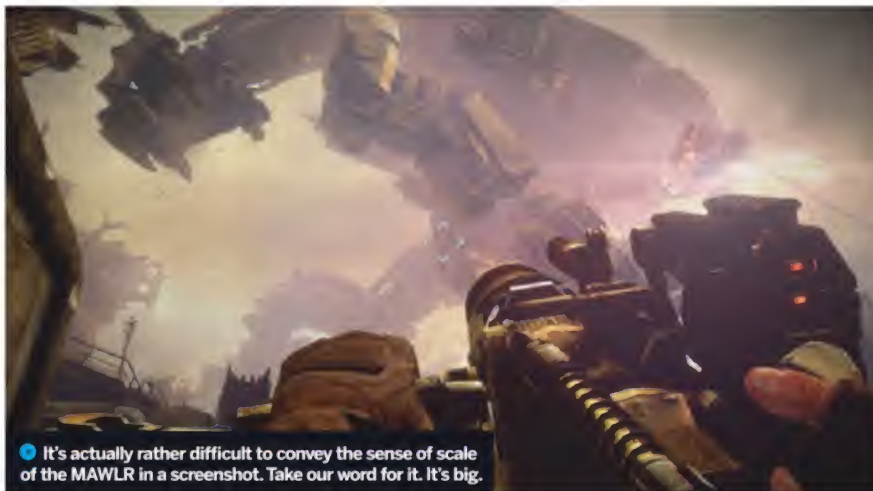
DEATH MACHINE

There are plenty of heavy weapons that can be detached from their mount Halo-style. Another favourite includes the multi-rocket firing WASP launcher.

● This is the 'Ice Saw' vehicle section. It looks more exciting here than it actually is.



● It's actually rather difficult to convey the sense of scale of the MAWLR in a screenshot. Take our word for it. It's big.



stunning game to look at, and we still feel safe to say it's the greatest-looking game of this

generation. Various visual filters and superb lighting effects saturate every level with depth and believability, and there are few developers who can make the grey metal of a gun barrel look quite so attractive. There's greater diversity in terms of the environments, too, with more of Helghan's varied topography explored. There's the previously mentioned jungle of fluorescent yellows, purples and oranges; the remote and inhospitable frozen wastes where you strap on a jetpack to bound across shelves of ice; large expanses of barren desert; and the familiar rubble-strewn industrial metropolises of Helghan's more densely populated areas.

It's because of this superlative presentation that Killzone 3 succeeds in spite of its flaws, masking its shoot and advance gameplay with such spectacular bombast that you forgive its laziness to do anything with the FPS other than make its guns heavier and shinier. Because, yes, there is a dearth of ideas in Killzone 3, and

It won't go down in history as a game that pushed the FPS into new territory

we can't help but wonder how much the focus on concepts like great graphics, 3D and Move implementation distracted Guerrilla Games from good game design and genuinely new ideas. But no matter. Killzone 3 isn't going to go down in history as a game that pushed the FPS into new territory, but it will be remembered as an explosive, riveting single-player that pushes all the right buttons when it comes to exhilarating its players, and one that looks damn good while doing it.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Let's finish with a quote as relevant today as it was six years ago: "A wonderfully realised vision: bleak, brutal, yet occasionally beautiful. But it's total war boiled down to nothing more than two forces separated by rubble."

80%

● There are lots of beards in Killzone 3. Didn't you hear? Beards = good games now.



RELEASE DATE: 18 FEBRUARY

Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds

Absolutely marvel-ous stuff

PS3 This is the easiest game you'll ever play. No really, it is. By that, we don't mean you'll be busting out 99-hit triple hyper delayed combos into super infinite custom combo cancels within seconds of hitting start on the title screen. Rather, it's the easiest game you'll ever play because even at the basic button-bashing level, *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* makes you feel like a god. A god summoning lasers, meteor crashes and fizzy colours while your HDTV cries out in pain, as it remembers the easier life it once had of showing *Coronation Street* every now and then.

You press a button, something amazing will happen. Wesker will teleport. Deadpool will throw a grenade. Tron Bonne will summon a giant Servbot to squash her opponents with a squeaky toy hammer. So yes, bashing the buttons does turn you into a fighting games god with minimum effort. Obviously labelling this as a button-basher will enrage fighting game experts, who are spitting their coffee over **Play** in sheer rage that we haven't pointed out that *MVC 3* also rewards dedication. You can learn how to throw assists into your combos to keep the hit count increasing, resets to keep the damage soaring and mix-ups to keep your opponent's mind frazzled. We understand why experts would be angry at the button-bashing label. Unfortunately, it's a knee-jerk response that not only leaves them with soggy, coffee-stained magazines but also ignores the greatest success of *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* – there's something for everyone.

You know the basics by now. *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* is a brawler that allows you to create a three-member team taken from a pick and mix selection of – surprise! – Marvel and Capcom characters. You can have Wolverine's blazing speed backed up by Chris Redfield's mines and grenades,



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Capcom
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Supports
1080i, 720p,
PlayStation Network,
Downloadable
content,
DualShock 3
Age Rating
3
Website
marvelvs Capcom 3
com



• If you want to upset people, use Spencer's Bionic Arm super.

or MODOK's array of defensive bombs contrasting with Hulk's smash-mouth style, or Akuma's up-close trickery protected by Dr Doom's molecular shield. It's up to you how you put your teams together, and finding the right combination becomes just as important and fun as picking Captain America because he's your favourite. Or Taskmaster because he looks like Skeletor. Or Arthur because he makes people online swear a lot. It's entirely up to you.

Some players really struggled with the technical ins and outs of *Super Street Fighter IV*, so good news – *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* has a much easier control system. Three buttons are assigned to light, medium and heavy attacks with the fourth as aerial, while the remaining

two buttons call in your surviving team-mates for quick attacks. This isn't the place to delve into a GameFAQs style guide detailing the controls but the point of mentioning the controls is to show that you can rattle through the buttons and string fancy combos together without too much demand being placed on the timing or memorising what to press.

Your HDTV will cry in pain, remembering an easier life of showing *Coronation Street* now and then

"But what does aerial mean?" you think, biting your lip in doubt and quietly hoping we'd ask the question out loud mid-review. Lucky you! Aerial is the most versatile button you have. Used on the ground, it smashes your



• MODOK is the cheapest bastard you'll ever fight.



• Play favourite Magnetio is 'the master of magnetism'.





🎮 Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds

With his speed, Wolverine gets easy damage off small openings.



The smallest of hits inflict huge damage on poor Phoenix.



opponent into the air for an aerial (do you see?) combo as you chase after them. Used in the air, it will either slam your opponent back to the deck or tag one of your team-mates in. Used with quarter-circle, aerial will perform a snapback, which is the fancy way of saying hitting-your-opponent-out-the-match-so-he-can't-return-for-a-while. You can see why they came up with another name for it.

You might already be worrying that, 'oh god, this is too complicated, what button do I press again, I forgot what aerial does, **Play** lied I thought this was going to be easy, oh god, oh god, oh god...' Calm down. *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* is easy to play, with special moves, combos and supers sliding off the buttons with a slick ease you rarely see in fighting games. Even if you do find it too hard, and you really won't, there's a Simple Operation mode. It's only socially acceptable for those with sausage-fingers and burger-hands that find pressing a direction and a button too tough but point is, you'll have no problem playing it.

Gameplay! That's what you care about, not controls. Within your team of three, you start off with one member and can tag your team-mates in as you see fit or even call them in for quick assist attacks to help you out. While *Street Fighter IV* places the emphasis on establishing the perfect range in the match and pressuring the opponent as he gets off the floor, *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* is about controlling the screen with assists and lightning-fast



Spencer would never beat Magneto. This screen is a lie.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Teams to suit your playstyle



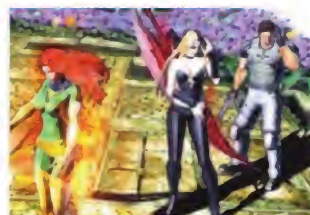
TEAM RUSHDOWN STORM/MAGNETO/ WOLVERINE

Storm and Magneto have air dashes that bring them back to earth quickly, allowing them to move around at lightning speed. Wolverine is fast anyway, making this a ridiculously quick team.



TEAM PROJECTILE ARTHUR/MODOK/ HSIEN-KO

Arthur can throw projectiles from all angles, MODOK can alternate between bombs and laser, Hsien-Ko has insanely fast recovery on her projectiles. Tough to beat, as they can attack from afar.



TEAM TRAP TRISH/PHOENIX/CHRIS

All three characters need to control the screen by setting traps that activate when the opponent passes over them. They can set traps as assists as well, so this trio can turn the screen into a pulsing minefield of death.



TEAM CHEAP HULK/IRON MAN/SUPER SKRULL

Pressing buttons with Hulk gives you huge damage for little effort. Iron Man spams Repulsor Blasts and cancels into Proton Cannon. Super Skrull... pretty much every move combos into another.



• Yet again, the master of magnetism, being magnetic.

reactions. It starts off one-versus-one but the screen quickly fills up with characters, projectiles and noise. As there are so many attacking possibilities because both players have so many options thanks to assists, this doesn't feel like a game where learning the match-ups is as important as *Street Fighter IV* but instead, one where you find yourself quickly reacting the unique and unusual situations that unfold.

Casual observers will inevitably compare *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* to *Street Fighter IV* because a) they're both by Capcom, b) they're both fighting games and c) they both have Ryu shouting Shoryuken. Even so, they're as different as night and day. One thing *Marvel* does share with *Street Fighter IV* is a gameplay gimmick to freshen things up. It's not a Focus Attack, though, as you rely on X-Factor instead. It's not just an excuse for a tedious Simon Cowell gag for lazy writers but also serves as a once-per-match power-up that boosts your damage. More importantly, it stops whatever you're doing, allowing you to cut moves short in order to stop their laggy recovery that leaves you wide open for punishment or string otherwise impossible combos together. Plus it's called X-Factor! Like the show! Get it? Ho ho, we're so lazy.

As with *Marvel Vs Capcom 2*, there's a high ceiling you can drive this game towards, as you delve into the technical world of infinities, snapbacks, counter-assists, advancing guard and so on. It might not necessarily be evident when you're playing through the arcade mode with its rudimentary fights-followed-by-big-boss-followed-by-ending but through repeated versus bouts, whether online or offline. It's

This will undoubtedly be the brightest, barmiest game you've played for a long, long time



• C.Viper fits surprisingly well in the mental *Marvel 3* engine.



• Hail Storm has lost its quick start-up from *MVC 2*.



• The best super in *MVC 3* because it's by MAGNETO.

such an easy game to pick up and play that you always feel like you can improve, that you're learning something more, that there's something else to try.

The main disappointment here is evident when you hit the character select screen for the first time. In comparison to the bloated *MVC 2*, this line-up feels more pedestrian and ordinary. While bringing the likes of Arthur and Haggar into such a fast-paced, faux 3D world is a nice touch, the cast doesn't match up to the variety and lunacy shown by its

predecessor which boasted Son-on, Amingo, Juggernaut, Marrow, Omega Red, Ruby Heart, Silver Samurai... the list goes on. There are further characters awaiting unlock via a points system, while Capcom has cheekily sealed off Jill Valentine and Shuma Gorath for future DLC but even so, the total sum doesn't quite match *Marvel Vs Capcom 2*.

Likewise, there's a slight whiff of disappointment when you have a wander around the menus looking for other options beyond arcade. There are combo challenges to try while training mode is comprehensive enough to even include a slider to replicate lag, yet they're temporary distractions rather than full-blown substitutes to arcade mode. You're left with the feeling that there's not that

DO FANCY COMBOS! Just follow these easy(-ish) steps



1. Start with a few quick attacks and then hit aerial...



2. ...and hold up to chase your opponent in the air



3. Keep the combo in the air using the light to heavy rule



4. Then your team-mate can do more damage



5. You can tag out again to your final team-mate



6. End with an air super, if your character has one



7. Land and taunt





• Storm vs Skeletron, the dream match-up! For someone. Maybe.



• Here's Zero, the character that no one will use, showing off.

much meat on the *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* bone, offering just enough to make the 'token effort' grade on the Sliding Scale of Try. Even the lack of stages cheapens the experience somewhat.

There's one large grey area in this review and one that won't become clear until *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* has been pounded to within an inch of its life – the balance. Years and years of tournament play saw *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* whittled down to just four tournament-viable characters in Cable, Magneto, Storm and Sentinel, leaving the other 52 scratching their necks at the dole queue. Its reputation endures as a game that was completely bonkers but also wildly unbalanced.

Marvel Vs Capcom 3 will do well to dodge that fate given there already seems to be a gaping chasm between the haves (Dante, Super Skrull) and have-nots (Thor, Chris). Anyone who fills their team with Arthur, MODOK and Hsien-Ko is also likely to turn newcomers off ever playing this game again should they bump into that combo online, thanks to their ability to endlessly fill the screen with projectiles, bombs, spiked balls, flames and lasers. Most of the cast have tricks or gimmicks to help them compete but even

so, it'll be interesting to see if a chasm does open up between the tiers.

You've got to take the rough with the smooth. That's always been the MVC way and it's fitting that things are no different for *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*. It's as button-bashy bonkers and as deep a fighting game as you want it to be. It's a game that's flexible enough with its own madcap engine that you can have a blast and fill the screen with screaming colours, crunching asteroids and scorching lasers every few seconds by pounding buttons or chip away to find the deep fighting game lying beneath its shiny surface. You get what you put into it and while that's the best thing you can say about any fighting game, this will live outside of the genre as the brightest, barmiest game you've played for a long time.

Ryan King

VERDICT

It's fast, frantic, fun, furious and flipping well other things that begin with f. Even so, it's a shame that Capcom didn't push the boat out with extra modes, stages or characters.

88%

🎮 Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds



• Characters with air supers are typically good choices.



• Stun them with She-Hulk, then mess up the next combo.



• Some supers pick opponents back up off the ground. Cheeky!



• What's going on? We don't really know. Caption fail.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

DC Universe Online

A massive comic relief



The last MMO game to arrive on console was released nearly seven years ago now, and since *Final Fantasy XI* there have been several attempts to translate a traditional PC genre across to the console crowd. *All Points Bulletin* was never meant to be, there's no hope for *Age Of Conan* now and *Final Fantasy XIV* seems to have saddled itself with problems that would condemn a lesser franchise to shut down. And as far as NCsoft's *Champions Online* was concerned... well, apparently there's no room in PS3-town for two superhero MMOs.

Sony Online Entertainment is very well-versed in creating original MMOs, but

cracking console has proven a fraught process on every level for other developers, so we're pleased to see a first-party studio take the plunge and succeed. *DC Universe Online* has an appropriate fit to console, subtly disguising sophisticated mechanics and hardcore elements of MMOs that would otherwise be exposed to a more experienced PC crowd, and adding the appeal of a strong brand. It begins with your character's creation, not quite as free-form as *Champions Online* but with recognisable DC character parts you can use as a template. Decide your alignment (hero or villain), choose your mentor, bolt on some abilities and then choose your iconic power – essentially, your favoured mode of transport. For us, it marked the resurrection of Super Cymru: a caped villain in full Welsh colours, with martial arts and crowd-controlling gadget skills who can sprint so fast that gravity doesn't get time to pull him down again when he decides to run up. Super Cymru was under the tutelage of Lex

Luthor, so thrust into the world of Metropolis, we started running errands for the arch-villain out of our base, Club L'Exellence.

Basic MMO mechanics work in *DC* the same way they do in any other subscription MMO – you pick up missions off NPCs in addition to those story missions relayed to you by your mentor, then go to the appropriate zone, pick items up, interact with nodes, talk to other NPCs and get into a scrap or two. The fetch, activate, talk-to and kill

Battles are a seamless fusion of familiar button combos and behind-the-scenes dice-rolling

missions are all in evidence here, but Sony has distributed, disguised and sugar-coated them in such a way that you can convince yourself that you're not just grinding your way through to the next level in the same way you might do in *World Of Warcraft*. Battles are a seamless fusion of familiar button combos and esoteric, behind-the-scenes dice-rolling, so combat

DETAILS

Publisher
Sony

Developer
Sony Online
Entertainment

Price

£39.99

Players

MMO

Genre

MMORPG

Supports

1080p, 1080i, 720p,

PlayStation Network,

Downloadable

content,

Age Rating

12

Website

www.dcuonline.com



BECOME A LEGEND

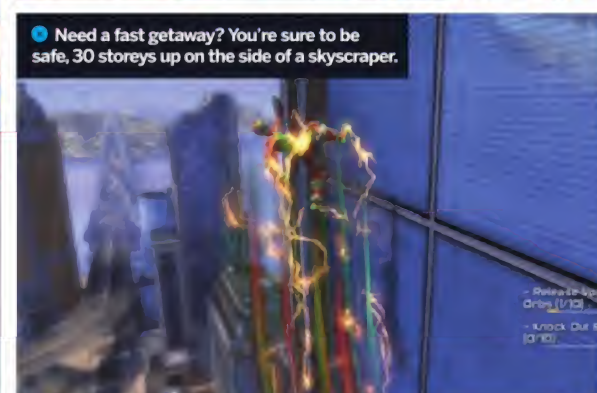
Playing as DC's iconic heroes and villains

AMONG THE MANY play pens Sony has provided for new players to acclimatise themselves to this new world, is the PvP Legends instance. Forge through the early story missions and you'll unlock characters with

which you can access PvP Legends to play instanced multiplayer matches. In our case as villains, our first Vault character was Harley Quinn. Lumped into an arena with three other human-controlled Harley Quinns, we faced

a team of four Robins, in a game that boiled down to a timed control point match. The winners take home some swag, though a chance to mess around as some of our fave characters was reward enough.





is very much an interactive process, rather than simply setting your avatar to attack and flicking the odd tab to activate an ability when the cool-down timer has run out. We found that as Super Cymru levelled up and we were able to pour points into his abilities, an element of genuine skill became a part of our combat routine, as more damage can be inflicted upon mobs via special attacks when powers are activated to a precise rhythm. Inherent problems arise in this system in big melee battles, where targeting can become confused, or when you hit a pocket of lag: in classic MMO combat your avatar would soldier on with its basic attack without interaction from the player, but if a connection drops – and it happens occasionally – while you're engaged in battle in *DCUO*, you're as good as defeated.

Curiously, you can progress from Level 1 to Level 30 (the XP cap) with little or no need to group at all, by simply picking up NPC missions and running with the main story

quest. We find it curious that Sony appears to have made the most single-player MMORPG we've ever played, and perhaps it's because the average PS3 owner has had little or no experience of MMOs. It certainly looks that way from our experience of the community – the few players on our server requesting help seemed oblivious to the efficiency of acronyms that stream up the chat channels on the PC version. Rather than leaving its population to form its own roving groups, *DC Universe* mollycoddles its players by placing strangers together in numerous instance types, accessible from your duty roster. It almost precludes any reason to talk to another player at all, which we found an oddly lonely experience.

The main events, so to speak, are the twin cities of Gotham and Metropolis and their familiar characters. The overarching story is of the heroes and villains ostensibly co-operating to repel the threat to Earth that is the alien Brainiac, and the world that Sony

has created from this licence is huge and fascinating. It's littered with hidden places to explore, collectables and side-quests all steeped in DC Comics lore and easily equal to several times the content you might expect from a *Grand Theft Auto* game. Given time, *DC Universe Online*'s population should mature as players become accustomed to playing within a community of this type. You can't predict the failure or success of an MMO on its release or even the first month or so of launch, but Sony has given *DCU Online* a real fighting chance of becoming a success.

Ben Biggs

VERDICT

Clever use of the DC licence for console, Sony has created an MMO that seems to fit the format from the basic mechanics up to the pad in your hand.

As good a reason to subscribe as we've seen in an MMORPG.

80%

RELEASE DATE: 22 FEBRUARY

Knights Contract

Section F, paragraph 12, clause ii:
Thou shalt be derivative and dull



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Game Republic
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-Adventure
Supports
1080i, 720p,
PlayStation Network,
Sixaxis,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.
bandainamcogames.
co.jp/cs/list/kc/



Namco Bandai appears infatuated with the theme of companionship as of late, releasing not one but three games revolving around two central characters in the past year alone. There was *Enslaved*, which focused on the growing bond between Monkey and Trip from a narrative perspective; *Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom*, which explored the relationship between big and small and how their combination could be used to solve puzzles; and now we have *Knights Contract*, a game which, boiled down to its essence, is basically one long escort mission.

Set during Europe's Middle Ages, you play as Heinrich – an executioner plagued by a curse of immortality, inflicted on him by a witch he killed. Years later that witch, Gretchen, returns and strikes a deal with Heinrich: if he agrees to kill her vengeful coven and take down the evil Dr Faust then she'll cure him of his affliction and he can have the death he's sought for so long.

Now, let's get one thing straight before we move on. Yes, you are indeed playing as an invincible warlord, but in *Knights Contract* you very much *can* die, or, to put it in less misleading terminology, you can fail. There's still a life bar in the top left of the screen, the only difference from your standard hack-'n'-slash title being that it belongs to Gretchen, not Heinrich. If she takes



enough damage she will die, and you'll be staring a 'game over' screen right in the face.

The point of the game is to keep Gretchen alive by any means necessary, which isn't always an easy task. Heinrich can be knocked to his knees by powerful foes, and if hit again he'll splatter into gibs. The only way to recover is to hammer (X) at the velocity of a pile driver, and even then your remaining foes have usually dealt deadly damage to your scantily clad sorceress companion. So, don't expect to go in scythe

which are activated by holding the shoulder buttons and pressing a face button. Again, like the 'invulnerability' mechanic it's little more than a gimmick – the attacks originate from Heinrich so they may as well be coming from him anyway.

There are six magical attacks unlocked throughout the game, consisting of spikes or sharp-toothed mandibles that burst from the floor; hammers that fall from the sky; thorns that entangle themselves around enemies; a massive scythe that takes out all in Heinrich's surrounding radius; and a glowing spear that can be aimed and thrown at distant enemies. Trigger them right and a devastating finishing move can be activated with a timed press of (O), killing your enemy in one blow. All spells can be upgraded using souls collected throughout the game (again, how very original) making each attack more powerful and increasing their area of effect.

The problem is that combat tends to be a case of entering a room and spamming these magical attacks along with random scythe combos. The result is colourful, and can be satisfying, but there's virtually nothing of the subtlety and grace of better games like *Bayonetta*. *Knights Contract* isn't a refined game – in most cases random spell and scythe combos can clear a room without Gretchen getting a single scratch.

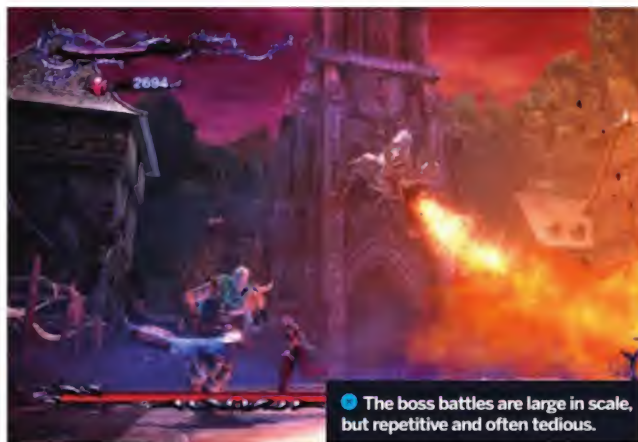
The problems don't end there. Unlike *Enslaved*, which delivered a real and tangible emotional connection between its two main characters (and on another level entirely *Ico*, which did so without even using dialogue), Heinrich and Gretchen's relationship is entirely unconvincing thanks to incredibly poor dialogue, voice acting, and the ridiculous world and melodramatic characters that surround them.

Furthermore Gretchen often has trouble navigating the environment, meaning the screen will often flash with colour indicating that you've

Boiled down to its essence, *Knights Contract* is basically one long escort mission

swinging and cleave your way through the game without any trouble.

Light and heavy attacks are mapped to (O) and (A) but although the menu contains a combo list there's not a great deal you can do with the two buttons that doesn't result in the same series of swipes and slashes. The game's real 'depth' – what little there is of it, at least – comes in Gretchen's magical attacks,



• The boss battles are large in scale, but repetitive and often tedious.



• Any game that allows you to uppercute a wolf can't be all bad.





Gretchen's spells can be truly devastating once levelled up.



Carrying Gretchen refills her life bar for some completely arbitrary reason.

THE WANTON WITCH

Gretchen's one witch not afraid to get out her cauldrons

ACCOMPANYING GRETCHEN'S standard magical attacks are more powerful spells activated with a pull of the left trigger. One will turn Heinrich into a big, blue, naked... thing with a huge sword (not a euphemism), while the other transports all of the enemies you're currently facing onto a huge, skyscraper-sized version of Gretchen (also naked) who will squish them either with her hand or under her leg. It's unnecessarily sexual, and kind of weird. Game



Republic seems adamant on sexualising Gretchen throughout the game, her clothes often very revealing, and disappearing entirely during these special spells.



If only *Knights Contract's* entertainment value matched its often-colourful enemy encounters.



Nope, that's not an invisible RPG Heinrich's wielding. Although saying that we kind of wish it was.

wandered too far from her while she's been snagged on a bit of scenery. Level design is similarly confused, or at least, the environmental signposting is. Several times throughout *Knights Contract* we found ourselves lost, at one point spending over 20 minutes retracing our steps attempting to find the next location and get to the next part of the game.

But let's not get carried away. *Knights Contract* is no bad game, it's just a very uninspired one that hangs all its ideas off a novelty feature that isn't that novel. You may be invincible, but don't be fooled. This game plays no different to most action-adventures, and there remain better examples of the genre that are certainly more worth your time and money.


Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Imagine *Darksiders* without the chunky art design, exciting combat and cool characters. The image you're left with will give you an idea of what *Knights Contract* is like – an unremarkable, clichéd action-adventure.

53%



A timed press of  after a successful spell causes gruesome and deadly finishing moves.





RELEASE DATE: 18 MARCH

Gods Eater Burst

God with a side order of fries, please

DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Namco Bandai
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Action RPG
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer
Age Rating
12
Website
namcobandai.com



Sometimes when playing a game for the first time, there's a moment where you just know you're going to enjoy seeing it through to the end. This is why you get games that try to dazzle you early on with loud explosions and shouting men competing for your attention, scared you'll lose interest and wander back to Game to trade it in. It doesn't always have to be this way. Sometimes, the this-game-is-going-to-be-bloody-good comes as early as the tutorial.

That's the trick that *Gods Eater Burst* – now with added 'S' so religious types aren't offended, lest an actual GOD is eaten – manages. The game itself is an action title with RPG elements, throwing you arena missions via a central hub that see you teaming up with friends to hunt down monsters and

scavenging materials to craft better swords, equipment and the like. So far, so usual. The nearest comparison would be *Monster Hunter* except accessible, or *Lost Planet 2* except fun.

Being a multiplayer-orientated title with the emphasis on action, *Gods Eater Burst* doesn't have the luxury of a pause button. Yet, the tutorial shows they added about 491 (rough guess) attacking options packed into the controls. You can change ammo type, shoot from distance, throw a stun grenade, dash in close, switch to melee and slash away before devouring your enemy, healing yourself and jumping to safety. With practice, it's painless and slick, helped by the gentle learning curve that slowly steeps upward as the missions get tougher and tougher.

Sure enough, that's exactly what happens. Plough onwards and the bosses balloon in size, demanding thought to your attacking patterns and co-ordinated moves with your AI or human partners. *Gods Eater Burst* is a tough bastard of a game, refusing to yield

You'll almost certainly want to snap your PSP in frustration

an inch once it feels you've had enough of a settling-in period, and you'll almost certainly want to snap your PSP in frustration at least once when a near-complete mission fails as you die right at the bitter end.

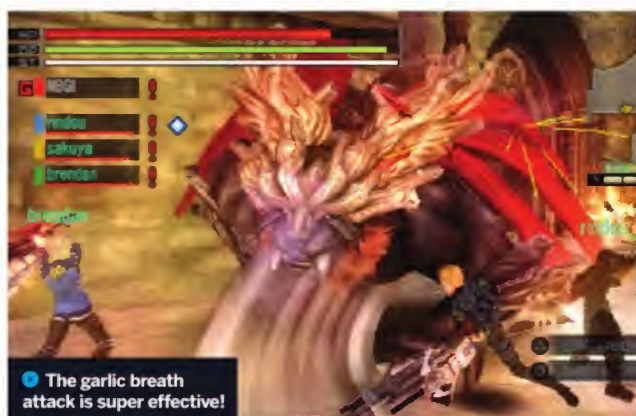
But you'll come back. With its lush visuals, attention to detail and millions (again, rough guess) of missions, there's a feel-good factor here that you only get when it's evident a studio has poured its blood, sweat and tears all over the development code. Give the tutorial a try if you don't believe us...

Ryan King

VERDICT

Gods Eater Burst has the looks, the controls and the missions to keep you coming back. Good alone, better with friends and a real tough nut.

88%



Or you could try



Monster Hunter Freedom Unite Issue 181
A complicated and fussy game but it's just about worth the effort. 77%

Let us write some themed captions together.

IF YOU DO NOT LIKE IT, GIVE TRUTH TO THE LIE. WRITE YOUR OWN FATE ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

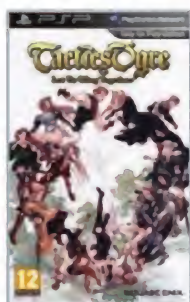
Dame Ravness

THEN YOU HOLD US UP AS HEROES TO SERVE SOME STRATAGEM. IS THAT IT?

Vyce

RELEASE DATE: 25 FEBRUARY

Let us explore this blocky and isometric town together.



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Square Enix
Price
£29.99
Players
1-2
Genre
RPG
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer
Age Rating
3
Website
tacticsogregame.com

Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together

Let us review this together

Besides that unspeakably awful title, there is nothing remarkable about *Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together*. Nothing. It would be pointless to suggest that there's ground-breaking design lying underneath the surface or the world of J-RPGs will be sent spinning off its axis by the bulldozer of innovation bludgeoning its way through, because that would be a lie made obvious by the well-worn young-angry-kids-versus-the-world plot that kicks in seconds after leaving the title screen.

So it's fortunate that *Tactics Ogre* is also one of the most competent, solid, well-put-together J-RPGs you will ever play. *Tactics Ogre* never strays too far from J-RPG tradition so while it never threatens to dazzle you with innovation, it does feel like a pure, nostalgic blast of old-school RPG action. The gameplay alternates between fighting and recruiting. The turn-based fighting sees you commanding a small team of clerics, warriors, archers and the like, prodding them around a battlefield to take swipes at the enemy. While you're initially drowning in micro-management, and no one buys a game for that to happen, you soon get the option to set the AI to look after certain companions.

The recruiting side is just as important as the fighting itself. Instead of levelling up individual characters, you level up their class, so you have to find standout representatives and tool them up with the best equipment. You uncover new classes throughout and some characters can only be recruited via responding to situations in a certain way – will you dole justice out to the necromancer or let him go? Save the cleric or leave him to die? It's not going to give *Mass Effect* nightmares anytime soon but it does keep things interesting.

Beyond that, we have standard tactical J-RPG territory. The soundtrack is typical Square Enix output, lush when it needs to be and dramatic when called upon. The plot is absolute gibberish, wrapped up in pretentious English that often demands a second reading to make any sense of it. The



menus are even more detailed than you would find at *The Ivy*, allowing genre fans to get lost in a good way. The tutorial rattles by at warp speed, allowing genre fans to get lost in a bad way. Even the game's title reeks of J-RPG.

Tactics Ogre is also one of the most competent, solid, well-put-together J-RPGs you will ever play

If someone invented a games compactor to compress an entire genre into a single title, *Tactics Ogre* would be the result of feeding J-RPGs into such a machine. If you're nostalgic for RPGs of days gone by, you want this whirring away in your PSP.

Ryan King

VERDICT

Deep, tactical and also slightly unfashionable, *Tactics Ogre* is the perfect example of the J-RPG genre and trades in potential innovation for a solid, competent and thoroughly enjoyable outing.

81%



Let us embark on a voyage across this old map together.

CAMPAIGN Day 4 of Godscale



Let us listen to the soldier's inspiring speech together.

TELL OUR WIVES AND CHILDREN OF HOW WE DIED HERE TODAY, OF OUR LAST SERVICE TO OUR HOMELAND!

Sir Hektor



RELEASE DATE: 4 MARCH

Hyperdimension Neptunia

The console war as you've never seen it before



DETAILS

Publisher
Tecmo Koei
Developer
Idea Factory
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Supports
1080p, Dolby Digital
5.1
Age Rating
12
Website
<http://nisamerica.com/games/neptunia/>



Hyperdimension Neptunia is one of those games with a concept so bonkers that it immediately commands your attention a lot more than it deserves to. Set in the world of Gamindustri, it tells the tale of a great 'console war' between four goddesses – Noire of Lastation, Vert of Leanbox, Blanc of Lowee and Neptune of Palneptune. If you're paying attention then you'll notice that the first three are re-workings of PlayStation, Xbox and Wii, while we can assume that Neptune is a play on the Sega Saturn, given that Sega is one of the publishers that collaborated on this game.

Neptune is the main playable character, with the other three taking the role of villains. Which is quite ironic for a PlayStation-exclusive RPG, especially since most Sega fans would have you believe that Sony is to blame for the death of Sega's final console, the Dreamcast. But then *Hyperdimension Neptunia* is rather tongue in cheek anyway. Many of the drama scenes poke fun at the games industry or make knowing references to its most famous games. At one point, our party watches as a group of men rotate a series of differently

Set in Gamindustri, it tells the tale of a great 'console war'

shaped boxes in order to fit them into a truck, leaving one 'long and thin' space for the end – a rather affectionate reference to *Tetris*.

With scenes like this, *Hyperdimension Neptunia* should appeal to anyone with a deep love and respect for videogames. But then it does have the massive drag factor of being developed by Idea Factory, who, as anyone who's suffered its games before knows, churns out some of the worst RPGs in Japan. Devoid of production values, lacking in depth and lazily put together, they're more 'no budget' than low budget.

Neptunia, sadly, isn't the game that sees Idea Factory pull its socks up. The event scenes feature still illustrations and endless non-interactive conversation, the music sounds like it was written for the Mega Drive by a tone-deaf composer, missions are

The one on the right is meant to represent PS3. See the resemblance?



You look the same, but you've changed so much. How can you look so proud while involving humans?



The battles are really the only interactive part of the game. And they're still dull.



Look, stats! This sure is an RPG. Just not a good one.



repetitive slogs through identical dungeons, and the battle system... well, to call it a 'system' at all would be an insult to every other RPG dev on the planet. It lacks even a basic level of strategy or customisation.

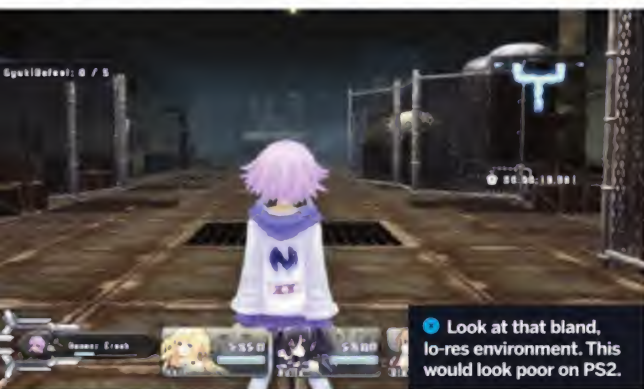
If you want funny references to videogames then watch *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*. If you want to be bored senseless for two weeks, with the occasional smile crossing your face, then play *Hyperdimension Neptunia*.

Ashley Day

VERDICT

A neat central concept can't hide the fact that this is another lazy RPG from Idea Factory. There's zero inspiration in the gameplay and even less in the presentation.

21%



Look at that bland, lo-res environment. This would look poor on PS2.



Neptune can transform from cute girl to sexy woman. Slightly uncomfortable!

Plus, the employees themselves aren't bad people. You shouldn't be picky about which lives deserve saving. Nep-Nep!

Or you could try



Final Fantasy XIII Issue 190
Despite its flaws, *Final Fantasy XIII* looks like a masterpiece next to *Neptunia*. 85%



DETAILS

Publisher
Tecmo Koei
Developer
Tecmo Koei Canada
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Hack 'n' slash
Supports
720p, DualShock 3
Age Rating
18
Website
www.gamecity.ne.jp/troy



RELEASE DATE: 4 MARCH

Warriors: Legends Of Troy

Koei: please stop it now, it's not funny



There comes a time when you have to do some growing up. When you have to accept certain truths about the world, and possibly change your outlook as a result. There always comes a time when, as idealistic as you might well be, you'll realise



Even Brad Pitt would make it better.

that freedom is – indeed – *not* free. We have to pay a huge price for it in innumerable ways, and that's even without getting into the realms of quashing the civil liberties of the populace in order to 'preserve freedom'. We have to make compromises and we have to allow more than we probably (and personally) want to allow. It's not perfect, but the freedom we as people enjoy is infinitely preferable to the alternative.

At least, that's what we thought before we played *Legends Of Troy*. Now we want to have a final say on what does and doesn't get made in the world of gaming. Fascism isn't a pretty word, but it would help make sure utter crap like this doesn't squeeze its way out of the arse cheeks of development and into our



Actually, if you pay £50 for this you deserve what's coming to you.

office or – gods forbid – the PS3 of a poor, unsuspecting gamer out there.

Think the worst *Dynasty Warriors* game ever, but with blood, and you're on the money. *Warriors: Legends Of Troy* is honestly so bad it's made us into fascists. Put that on your box.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Rather than continue whining, let's tell you about a great sandwich Ian had in New York: beef brisket, as big as his (huge) head. A bit dear, but highly recommended if you're around the Stage Deli near West 54th Street.

14%



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
feelplus
Price
£44.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Action-Adventure
Supports
1080i, 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
16
Website
www.mindjackgame.com

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Mindjack

This game makes us go out of our mind



Poor *Mindjack*. It had to suffer the complete and utter indignity of being played just after we'd finished *Dead Space 2* – a game far superior in every way. But even if we hadn't just played a game as atmospheric and downright brilliant as *Dead Space 2* we'd still be able to see *Mindjack* for

The only thing that makes *Mindjack* notable is the fact it's so very, very bad

what it is – an insipid, flavourless third-person shooter of the worst kind.



Take a good, long look at this screenshot. This is the kind of game we're dealing with here.

As the title suggests the key concept here is the ability to hack into NPC's minds and control their actions – something the plot fails to explain. It's a neat idea, but implemented terribly, meaning you'll rarely bother to inhabit anyone other than the main character.

The concept is utilised far more imaginatively for the multiplayer aspect of the game, which allows random players to join your single-player campaign and mindjack the enemy forces, working either alongside or against you. In



You can take enemies hostage but, disappointingly, you can't execute them.



This screenshot almost makes *Mindjack* look exciting. It's not.

theory it's a good idea, in execution it's poor, the human element making already dreary firefights even more difficult and irritating.

Mindjack is poorly conceived, badly put together, contains virtually no story and some of the blandest voice acting we've ever heard. feelplus may have wanted to stand out from a very crowded genre with one unique idea, but the only thing that makes *Mindjack* truly notable is the fact it's so very, very bad.

Chris McMahon

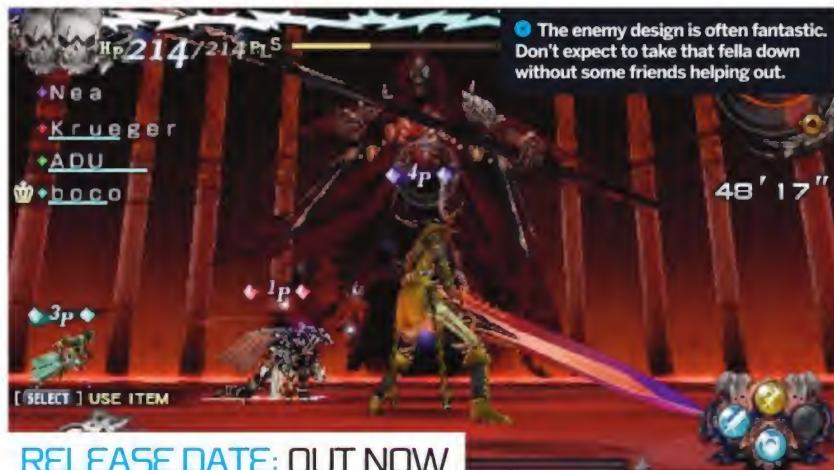
VERDICT

We don't know what Square Enix was thinking. It's generic game making at its worst, and one cool idea isn't going to change that if everything that surrounds the idea is bereft of entertainment value.

38%



Like every other dungeon crawler, *Lord Of Arcana* is at its best when playing with friends.



The enemy design is often fantastic. Don't expect to take that fella down without some friends helping out.

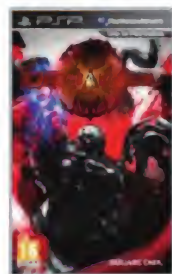
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lord Of Arcana

Lord Of Arc-yawn-a



Publisher Square Enix Developer Access Games Price £34.99
Players 1-4 Genre Action Supports Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer
Age Rating 16 Website <http://na.lordofarcana.com>



Ever since Capcom's *Monster Hunter Portable* started dominating Japan's sales charts we've witnessed many competing Japanese

familiar to any who have played the aforementioned games. There are little flourishes here and there. The battle system incorporates special abilities like the Coup de Grace finishing move, and Melee Battles activate gory QTEs. There are also Ultimate Spells, which summon huge beasts with devastating attacks.

companies jump on the PSP dungeon crawler bandwagon. Namco Bandai has been working on *God Eater Burst*, while Sega continues to ply its *Phantasy Star Portable* series.

Square Enix has thrown its hat into the ring with *Lord Of Arcana*, a PSP dungeon crawler that will feel very

And, as we've come to expect from Square Enix games on PSP, the visuals are beautiful, with the player able to decorate their characters with flamboyantly ornate armour and enemy design. But when you get down to brass tacks it's the same old story of linear dungeons and looting. *Lord Of Arcana* is structurally sound, but mechanically there's little to differentiate it from the crowd. Unless you're really desperate for a change there's no real reason you shouldn't just wait for *Monster Hunter Portable 3rd*'s UK release, should it receive one.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Lord Of Arcana has some neat ideas tucked away in its design. However, as a package it's online dungeon crawling by the numbers and could get dull quite quickly.

65%



The game gets deeper the further you progress, but not by much.

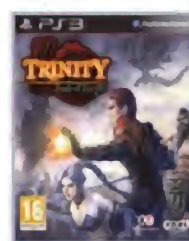
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll

As dull to play as its title is difficult to say



Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Omega Force Price £49.99
Players 1 Genre Action RPG Supports 720p, Sixaxis, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1 Age Rating 16 Website www.trinity-game.com



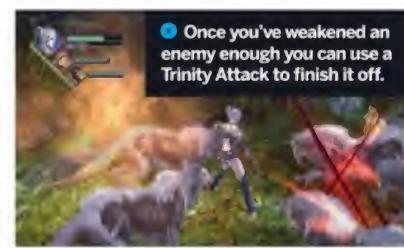
If *Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll* rings a bell, it's because this is not an original IP. In fact, it's the fourth game in a series that's appeared

on all PlayStation hardware but never found release outside of Japan. *Souls Of Zill O'll* is the first game to appear on PS3, and also the first in the series not to be developed in-house by Koei.

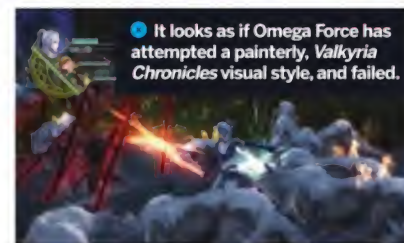
This time Omega Force is developing, and the action-RPG setup of the game could have been an interesting new direction for a company known for hack-'n'-slash titles such as *Dynasty Warriors*. But no. Omega Force does little to distinguish *Souls Of Zill O'll* from its past work. Despite having several spells and three characters to choose from during combat, battles still feel like a case of hammering at the same buttons over and over again.

The narrative sounds like bad Tolkien fanfic, story is delivered through static dialogue screens, and the world is explored through an uninspiring map and menus.

Souls Of Zill O'll isn't a terrible action-RPG, but an over-simplified



Once you've weakened an enemy enough you can use a Trinity Attack to finish it off.



It looks as if Omega Force has attempted a painterly, *Valkyria Chronicles* visual style, and failed.

attempt that pales in comparison to better-realised and more comprehensive examples like *Dragon Age*. At the end of the day, the game makes only one thing clear: there's a reason the series hasn't found release outside of Japan before now.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

There's a vaguely enjoyable game nestled somewhere but overall *Souls Of Zill O'll* is too repetitive and lacking in the kind of depth we look for in an action RPG.

56%



Levelling up is slow and steady. Don't expect to be hitting level 10 for a good few hours.

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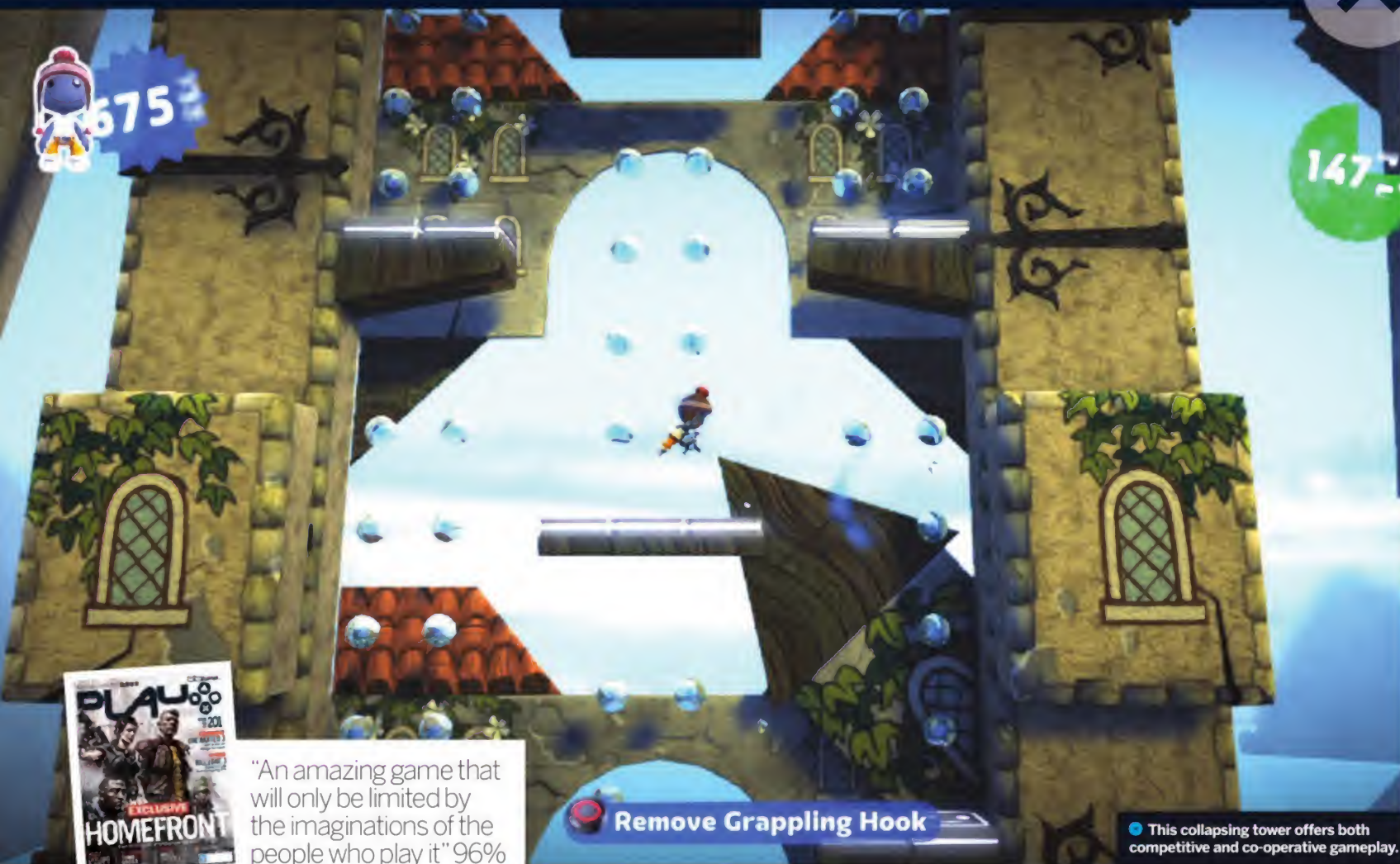


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"An amazing game that will only be limited by the imaginations of the people who play it" 96%

Remove Grappling Hook

This collapsing tower offers both competitive and co-operative gameplay.



LittleBigPlanet 2

Care in the community

DETAILS

Publisher Sony
Developer Media Molecule
Release Date Out Now
Price £49.99
Players 1-4
Genre Platform
Supports 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, DualShock 3, Move, Dolby Digital 5.1

Media Molecule must be slapping each other on the back and congratulating each other on the genius of having opened up its latest game to public beta. Flicking through the levels made by the community only a few days after *LittleBigPlanet 2*'s release, there were a lot of familiar names to be seen. Names of *LittleBigPlanet* fans who had been privileged enough to get early access to the game, now returning to the full version and just picking up where they left off.

The beta probably told MM a great deal about how the community would be using its online functionality, but it also taught the community how to make use of the tools at their disposal. Those that we got to talk to a few months back talked about planning projects for the final game and holding back their true potential for fear of wasting it on a temporary beta. That potential is now there for all to see.

The quality and variety of games on offer is only going to get better, but already it is

intimidatingly good. From tower defence games to shooters with a fair supply of platformers, there is just so much online for you to play already. And thanks to Media Molecule's new search tools, finding the content you want is much easier, too.

MM Picks remain your first stop, taking a look at the levels and games that the developers believe are worth your attention, but beyond that the parameters are endless. You can search by specific term, by level content or just by name. And that goes for whether you're in front of your TV at home or by a PC or mobile internet device around town. Thanks to lbp.me there's no reason not to be keeping up to date with what's happening in *LittleBigPlanet* and then queue up levels to play when you get home.

If you find all this amazing gaming damaging to your creative ego you can always get involved in new ways. The reviews system introduced for this game is an excellent source

of comments and criticism on levels, so if you have something to say about a creation you may as well, because there are rewards and pins to be had. While the creation tools may be too much for some to get to grips with, the community is actually much more inclusive than before.

Online play has not been without issues early on, however. Connecting to multiplayer games in particular has proven a challenge, sometimes ending in an endless loading loop

We're delighted to report that *LittleBigPlanet 2* is in full swing

that you need to quit the game to escape. We're confident Media Molecule will be taking a look at these issues, especially since competitive multiplayer modes are now so important to *LBP 2*'s offering. As you read this, in fact, it could well be fixed, as similar issues were resolved during beta testing.

online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。



● Tower defence games should be a rich source for the community.



● There are few things more pleasurable than Rogue Panda Rescue.

In the meantime we're delighted to report that *LittleBigPlanet 2* is in full swing. The levels are being made, the game is playing brilliantly and finding great content is easier than ever. All in all there can be no denying that *LBP 2* is far and away an improvement on its predecessor and a new benchmark by which to judge user-generated-content-driven games. Once again Media Molecule is defining Play, Create, Share.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

There's some work to be done in places, but once again the *LBP* community is working at full force and making some amazing content for you to explore.

What's amazing is that the best is clearly yet to come.

92%

CO-OP OR COMPETE

A new phenomenon in level design

AS IF TO prove just how different *LBP 2* is to its predecessor we were surprised and delighted to see a number of levels attempt alternate versions of themselves. For instance, we saw levels in both a competitive and co-op form encouraging different styles of multiplayer gaming depending on your taste. Where this could go in the future is anyone's guess, but we'd count on a number of new ideas springing up, such as different genres of game based in the same world. We were also delighted by a number of games that featured a kind of level select system, sending you to completely different settings depending on your choice. The genius of *LBP* players seems to know no end.

PSN Roundup

ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD – ANIMUS PROJECT UPDATE 2.0

Or ACBAPU for short

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Price Free Players 6-8 Genre Action Adventure

A new map and a new game mode. Not bad for £0.00. The map is the Pienza, a tightly packed, darkly lit maze of streets. It's perfect for chases because corners are never far away and it's not bad for free running either thanks to the tightly packed rooftops giving you plenty of paths to follow. Chest Capture is the new mode, mixing capture the flag with territory gameplay (you don't have to take the chest anywhere, just stand by it). It all works well enough and the new map plays to the strengths of *Brotherhood's* multiplayer, but it doesn't



make *Assassin's Creed* online make any more sense or any more fun. JG

★★★★★

MINDJACK

Why have you turned into a gorilla?

Publisher Square Enix Developer feelplus Price £49.99 Players 1-4 Genre Shooter

How the hell did this happen? The idea of having players mindjack into the shoes of soldiers you're up against during Campaign mode is a good one. The idea of ensuring the camera never works, randomly replaying levels without rhyme or reason, never explaining the story, inserting a level-up system to ensure pros always dominate noobs, watching players turn into gorillas, wondering why said gorillas are running through walls, swearing as blindfire leaves you exposed, swearing more as cover doesn't work, weapons being taken off you, more gorillas, inconsistent game rules, laggy matches... those ideas could



have been safely dropped, we reckon. Well, that and not having any other modes to fall back on. But hey, what the hell do we know, right? RK

★★★★★

SPARE PARTS

Made with EA's spare netcode

Publisher EA Developer Bright Light Price £9.99 Players 1-2 Genre Platform

Given it's designed around co-operative platforming, *Spare Parts* should be able to hit a five-star rating out of the park. Great! Job done! Let's go home. Which saves a wordier explanation on how *Spare Parts* was also designed around tight platforming, that doesn't go particularly well with laggy servers, which is exactly what *Spare Parts* has been saddled with, thus ruining the experience. Oh.

It's a real shame because when you play the less demanding platforming levels, having two players in tow definitely makes the experience more enjoyable – a light, frothy, simple collect 'em up.



As soon as the trickier jumps show up, however, it's time to log off and stick to the offline version. You'll thank us in the long run. RK

★★★★★

DETAILS

Publisher
Wizards of the Coast
Developer
Stainless Games
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£7.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Puzzle/Strategy

Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers GAME

Who needs cards when you have a PS3?

AFTER FINDING MASSIVE success on Live Arcade, Stainless Games' adaptation of the phenomenally popular card game finally appears on PS3.

Effectively a turn-based strategy game, the aim is to battle rival wizards who represent the five colours of Magic – Black, White, Red, Blue and Green. Starting off with 20 Life, you must reduce your opponents to zero by summoning monsters and casting powerful spells. All spells have a specific casting cost, which are cast by tapping your mana. As it's only possible to lay one Land a turn, strategy is required in order to

make the best use of your available hand.

The end result is a very impressive adaptation of the card game, even if it is geared towards newcomers.

Longevity is assured thanks to a number of different

opponents and there's also an impressive multiplayer mode geared towards two and four-player matches. Another nice touch is the inclusion of a number of fiendish puzzles that give you just one turn to solve them.

Presentation is of a very high standard with gorgeous reproductions of some of the game's more famous cards, while netcode is nice and stable. In fact, our only real niggle is that it's higher priced than the identical Live Arcade version (why do publishers think we're stupid enough to believe that 800 points equates to £8?) and that the three expansion packs weren't included. The ability to properly edit your decks would have also been nice.

That said, *Duels Of The Planeswalkers* remains an excellent strategy game and a cracking alternative to the more hardcore online PC game. Highly recommended. **DJ**

VERDICT

While it lacks the depth of the physical game, this is an excellent introduction to **Magic: The Gathering.** **84%**



Challenges are surprisingly fun, requiring you to finish an opponent in a single move.

DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment Europe
Developer
Sony Computer Entertainment Sony Japan
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£9.99
Players
1
Genre
Puzzle

echochrome II GAME

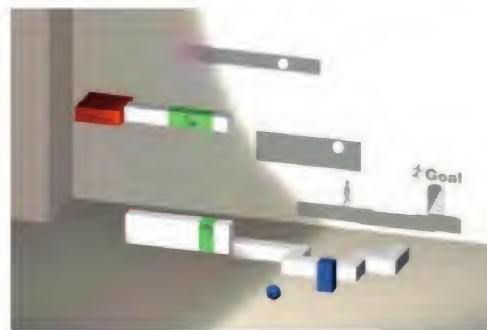
There really is something lurking in the shadows

NOW THIS IS refreshing, a sequel that actually improves on the original and does it in a completely refreshing and innovative way.

The core concept remains the same as the original: get your continually walking man to the exit. The difference here, though, is that rather than manipulating objects, you instead shift shadows to create new platforms for your nameless avatar to work across.

It's a delightful concept, with the subtle shifting of shadows enabling you to pull off all sorts of clever tricks. Half bury the shadow of a ball in the ground and it will turn into a handy trampoline, the shadows of doorways can be used to create teleporters, while blocks with

holes in can create handy pits for your man to fall through. It's a clever concept, enhanced by the distinct abstract imagery, a gorgeous orchestral soundtrack and exceptional use of the Move controller.



Using the Move is very intuitive and it really adds to the overall experience. Longevity is also assured thanks to several additional modes that range from an excellent level editor, to painting platforms and simply escorting your avatar to an exit.

There are issues – foreground objects can obscure your view on later stages and certain levels can also be solved by simple waggling, but it remains a well-put-together package. In fact, we'll go as far as to say it's the best example of Move that we've yet seen. **DJ**

VERDICT

Constantly inventive and always causing you to think outside the box, **echochrome II** is a must-have. **83%**



While later puzzles are tricky, some can be solved by simply waving the Move device around.

Neo Geo Station GAME

Turn your PlayStation 3 into a time machine

BACK IN ITS day the Neo Geo was the retro equivalent of the PS3. It delivered state-of-the-art graphics, cutting-edge technology and plenty of exclusive games. It was also prohibitively expensive for the average gamer, due to the machine costing over £500 and the games costing around £250 each, an amazingly high price in the early-Nineties.

To celebrate the Neo Geo's 20th birthday, SNK Playmore has released the *Neo Geo Station* for both PS3 and PSP, a brand-new service that allows gamers to experience an essential slice of gaming history.

PS3 owners currently have access to ten games: one-on-one fighters *Fatal Fury*, *The King Of Fighters '94*, *Art Of Fighting* and *Samurai Shodown*; space shooter *Alpha Mission II*; sport titles *League Bowling*, *Super Sidekicks* and *Baseball Stars Professional*; platformer *Magician Lord* and the truly excellent *Metal Slug*. While there are only a few true standouts here it's nevertheless

Minis Round-Up GAME

We take a look at the latest Minis releases

THERE HAVE BEEN some truly impressive Minis released over the past few weeks, so we felt it was the perfect time to do a monthly round-up of all the available games. By far the most important release is the port of *Angry Birds* (93%/£2.49). While it's four times the price of the original iPhone game, it's a truly astonishing port that has you flinging a variety of different birds into the evil pigs that are dotted about each stage. Simple controls, clever physics and amazingly addictive gameplay help it easily justify its price. *NOVA: Near Orbit Vanguard Alliance* (63%/£3.99), another popular iPhone game, fares less well. While Gameloft has done the best it can with the PSP's controls, it's a fairly basic FPS that's far too fiddly for its own good.

The iPhone conversions continue with an expensive, but authentic port of *Edge* (85%/£3.99). You must negotiate a cube through a number of deviously designed abstract puzzles. It's a fun puzzler that only peters out on the later stages. *I Must*

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Store Roundup

DETAILS

Publisher SNK Playmore Developer M2 Release Date Out Now Price £7.99
Players 1-2 Genre Various

a solid collection representing a decent range of genres.

Presentation is fantastic thanks to excellent emulation that comes with a variety of different graphic options, the ability to change screen ratios and the addition of new, beautifully rendered instruction books and online play.

The prices feel a bit high considering that the PS2 already has a compilation of all these games but, on the other hand, an original AES will cost you close to £1,000. Our main issue is that the network code is pretty poor, making online play a real chore.

Still, if you have ever been interested in Neo Geo history, then *Neo Geo Station* is the perfect place to start. **DJ**

VERDICT

The prices may put some off, but the games have been treated with the respect they deserve.

na %



£7 for Metal Slug is a bargain considering you won't get much change from £1,000 for the original.



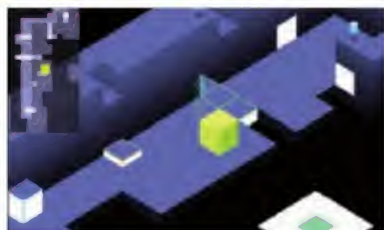
DETAILS

Publisher Various Developer Various Release Date Out Now Price £1.74 - £3.99
Players 1 Genre Various

Angry Birds is just as hellishly addictive here as it is on iPhone.



Run! (70%/£2.49) is a fun *Canabalt* clone that has your escaped prisoner running as far as he can over a constantly changing obstacle course. It looks fairly simplistic, but the challenging pace will certainly have you returning for one more go. *Sky Force* (68%/£2.49), *Who's That Flying?!* (64%/£3.99) and *A Space Shooter For Two Bucks* (55%/£1.74) are fairly conventional shooters, with *Sky Force* holding our attention the longest thanks to its well-designed levels and power-ups.



VERDICT

If you can only afford one new Minis game this month it has to be the excellent *Angry Birds*.

RISK: FACTIONS GAME

Like the board game, but with talking cats

Publisher Electronic Arts Developer Stainless Games Price £7.99 Players 1-5 Genre Strategy

EFFECTIVELY TWO GAMES in one (as the original board game is also included), *Risk: Factions* ups the ante by streamlining the gameplay, introducing environmental hazards like volcanoes and including five crazy factions made up of killer cats and hairy yetis.

The end result is a very enjoyable take on the classic board game, which is only really let down by occasionally laggy online games and an overall lack of objectives to complete.

80 %



EAT THEM! GAME

So many buildings to destroy, so little time...

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Developer FluffyLogic Price £6.29 Players 1-4 Genre Arcade

LIKE WANTON DESTRUCTION? Then *Eat Them!* will appeal to you. Similar in style to the classic *Rampage*, you must take your behemoth and smash your way through a variety of stages. Gameplay modes range from simple timed destructions to eating a set amount of people within a certain time limit, but it gets boring quickly. The comic-book-styled visuals appeal and its fun earning parts to build new monsters, but the shallow gameplay soon becomes monotonous.

60 %



TETRIS GAME

So that's what tetrominoes look like in high definition

Publisher Electronic Arts Developer EA Mobile Price £7.99 Players 1-6 Genre Puzzle

ASIDE FROM SHINY high-definition visuals, this new version of *Tetris* from EA benefits from Trophy support and a truly fun multiplayer mode that allows you to play some of the excellent new gameplay modes against up to five friends. The code is a little shaky in places, but it's a great fun all the same, even if you can't currently form parties. Despite our cynicism, there's no denying that the gameplay is as tight and fun as ever, even if you've already seen much of what this game offers.

84 %



BLOKUS GAME

One board game you'll want to keep in the cupboard

Publisher Gameloft Developer In-House Price £3.99 Players 1-4 Genre Puzzle/Board

THERE AREN'T MANY board games on PSN and even fewer that utilise Move. Sadly, *Blokus* is not a good champion for either. Taking control of one of four players, you take it in turns to lay different-shaped blocks on a large playing grid. You can only lay blocks corner to corner, so strategy is required to box others in and keep yourself free. It's a nice idea, but cumbersome controls and dull challenges soon means *Blokus* runs out of steam. A nice idea, but we'd rather play the real deal.

54 %



MICROBOT GAME

The human body really isn't a thing of beauty

Publisher EA Developer Naked Sky Price £6.29 Players 1-2 Genre Shooter

CONGRATS NAKED SKY Entertainment; you've made a shoot-'em-up that's as exciting to play as watching paint dry. It's a real pity, because *Microbot's* visuals are very impressive.

Being shot into a bloodstream via a hypodermic is a nice touch, as is the ability to gradually upgrade your weapons and craft. However, the gameplay is slow and insipid, while even co-op can't inject life into the sluggish controls and uninspiring attack waves. Stick with *PixelJunk Shooter* instead.

51 %



TOP DARTS GAME

Turn your living room into a virtual pub

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Developer Devils Details Price £6.29 Players 1-2 Genre Sport

AFTER BEING LESS than impressed with *Start The Party!* we've found another Move title that is far better suited to party play. The motion controls are great, with the Move controller tracking your on-screen throwing motions perfectly.

There is a great selection of gameplay modes, ranging from traditional 501 matches to tic-tac-toe, and extensive league matches to get stuck into. Only a complete lack of online play and poor AI let it down.

71 %





● Jesse Eisenberg excels as Mark Zuckerberg. You just can't take your eyes off him.



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
English DTS-HD
Master Audio 5.1
Director
David Fincher
Starring
Jesse Eisenberg,
Justin Timberlake,
Andrew Garfield

The Social Network

Fincher gives Facebook the high-definition treatment

Fincher's new film feels like an odd choice for the director. There are no sweeping camera angles and few examples of his pursuit of technology as seen in *The Curious Case Of Benjamin Button*. *The Social Network* is simply the loose retelling of one of the biggest internet court cases ever and it's all the better for it.

Aided by a sharp script and superb acting, *The Social Network* is a solid character piece that focuses on a person's obsession and how his actions spawned a multibillion dollar company and several fierce law suits.

Mark Zuckerberg is clearly made out to be the villain and is portrayed brilliantly by Jesse

Eisenberg. Conniving and unafraid to stitch up his closest friends in his pursuit of becoming the sole CEO of Facebook, Eisenberg is endlessly watchable, as you're never quite sure how he's going to react.

Justin Timberlake also delivers as Napster founder Sean Parker, who easily manages to impress the nerdy Zuckerberg with a simple promise of making billions and becomes instrumental in helping to drive a wedge between Zuckerberg and his best friend and co-founder Eduardo Saverin.

It's a fantastic character piece and, despite dealing with both the past and two separate court cases, Fincher effortlessly lets you know which time period you're in, allowing you to easily soak in the ongoing drama.

David Fincher has always been a huge supporter of Blu-ray, so it's no surprise that *The Social Network* is beautifully presented. The transfer only just falls short of perfection; detail is wonderful, with even the darkest of scenes revealing plenty, while outside scenes bristle with startling clarity.

Audio is also of an extremely high standard, with the rich DTS-HD track easily highlighting Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross's superbly understated score. Dialogue throughout is excellent, with superb prioritising, while even

the smallest details like the incessant tapping of keyboards ring out with razor clarity.

The extras are also of a very high standard, with two commentaries – one with David Fincher, the other with writer Aaron Sorkin and most of the main cast – a 90-minute

Aided by a sharp script, The Social Network is a solid character piece

making-of, discussions of the score and post-production and the end result is an impressively detailed account of *The Social Network's* creation. It's not quite on a par with the attention to detail that can be found on other Fincher Blu-rays, but it easily outstrips the efforts of other big-name movies.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It's not the masterpiece some are claiming, but it's an excellent character study and is backed up by a superb transfer, stunning audio and a wealth of great extras.

RATING: ★★★★★



Plus all
the latest
hardware
reviews

Blu-ray Reviews

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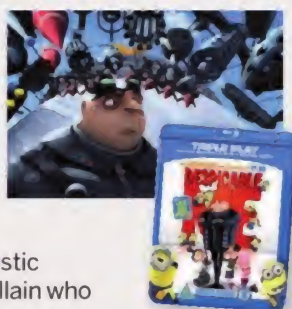
Despicable Me

PRICE: £25.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1

DIRECTOR: Pierre Coffin,
Chris Renaud

STARRING: Steve Carell,
Russell Brand, Julie Andrews



STEVE CARELL GIVES a fantastic performance as Gru, a super villain who is struggling to compete with his younger competitors. After adopting three young orphans for his latest scheme he slowly changes, as their innocence chips away at his gruff exterior. Full of fun, *Despicable Me* is a resounding success that shouldn't be missed.

RATING: ★★★★★

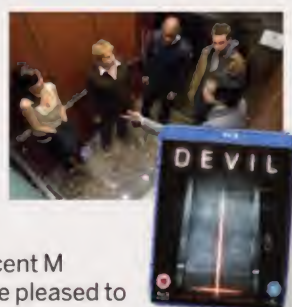
Devil

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital 5.1

DIRECTOR: John Erick
Dowdle

STARRING: Chris Messina,
Matt Craven, Geoffrey Arend



AFTER BEING BURNED by recent M Night Shyamalan films, we were pleased to discover that *Devil* is quite an entertaining yarn. Five unrelated people get trapped in a lift and are slowly picked off one by one, as it's revealed that one of them is the devil. While the ending disappoints, there are enough tense moments to keep you on the edge of your seat.

RATING: ★★★★★

Out Of Sight

PRICE: £27.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital 5.1

DIRECTOR: Steven
Soderbergh

STARRING: George Clooney,
Jennifer Lopez, Ving Rhames



HERE'S THE PROOF that Jennifer Lopez was once a creditable actress. While J-Lo's movie career has long since gone down the toilet, *Out Of Sight* remains as entertaining as ever. Brilliantly acted thanks to killer dialogue, *Out Of Sight* remains one of cinema's sexiest thrillers and a career highlight for director Steven Soderbergh.

RATING: ★★★★★

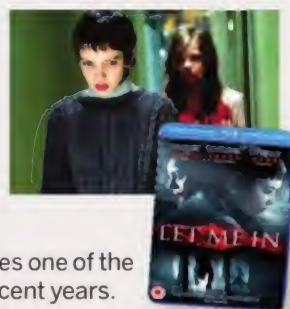
Let Me In

PRICE: £15.99

SOUND: Dolby TrueHD 5.1

DIRECTOR: Matt Reeves

STARRING: Kodi Smit-
McPhee, Chloe Moretz,
Richard Jenkins



IT'S A BRAVE man who remakes one of the most popular horror films of recent years. Even if you've already watched the superior *Let The Right One In* – which featured a bullied boy falling in love with a girl vampire – this remake remains essential viewing thanks to truly stunning performances from its young cast. A rare intelligent remake from Hollywood.

RATING: ★★★★★

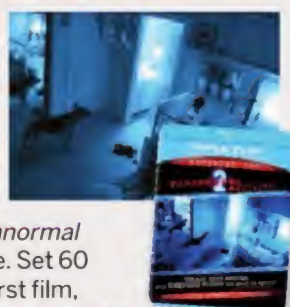
Paranormal Activity 2

PRICE: £27.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital 5.1

DIRECTOR: Tod Williams

STARRING: David Bierend,
Brian Boland, Molly Ephraim



AFTER THE SUCCESS of *Paranormal Activity*, a sequel was inevitable. Set 60 days before the events of the first film, Williams' sequel ramps up the tension, but it's rarely as scary as the original. Things become rather interesting once the doomed couple from the original film turn up, but this is strictly Hollywood by numbers and as a result it's very disappointing.

RATING: ★★★★★

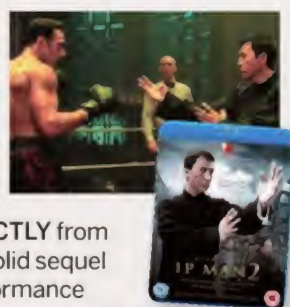
Ip Man 2

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital 5.1

DIRECTOR: Yip Wai-Shun

STARRING: Donnie Yen,
Sammo Hung



CONTINUING ALMOST DIRECTLY from the events of *Ip Man*, this is a solid sequel that features another top performance from Donnie Yen as the titular character. Fuelled by fantastically energetic fight scenes by Sammo Hung and focusing on Ip Man's struggle to get his martial arts school up and running. While a little flabby in places, the superb fight scenes make up for the dull lulls.

RATING: ★★★★★

Charts

UK Top 5

- 1 Inception**
Nolan's entertaining thriller remains at the top of the charts, even with its barmy plot.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2 Toy Story 3**
The best *Toy Story* ever? You bet it is. If you can watch this without shedding a tear you're not human.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3 Back To The Future Trilogy**
One of the best trilogies ever on a beautiful Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4 Resident Evil: Afterlife**
It's a huge improvement over past *Resident Evil* films.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5 The Girl Who Played With Fire**
Decent sequel that's let down by being far too patchy in places.
RATING: ★★★★★

US Top 5

- 1 The Social Network**
Fincher delivers another potential Oscar contender. Although this time, it'd be deserved.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2 Inception**
Nolan's dream thriller can do no wrong, and continues to dominate on both sides of the pond.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3 The Town**
Ben Affleck's taut thriller is an excellent piece of work that looks ace on Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4 Dances With Wolves 20th Anniversary**
Hard to believe that Kevin Costner's classic is 20 years old.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5 Machete**
Danny Trejo stars in this over-the-top B-movie that plays like *The Expendables* on acid.
RATING: ★★★★★

Top 5 George Clooney films

- 1 Out Of Sight**
One of Clooney's finest films is now available in high definition. Stylish, clever and very, very sexy.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2 Good Night, And Good Luck**
Clooney's directorial debut boasts a terrific transfer on Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3 Syriana**
The transfer is a little weak, but the film remains a scorching political thriller.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4 Fantastic Mr. Fox**
A wonderfully animated film that sees Clooney play the titular fantastic fox.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5 Ocean's 11**
Forget the terrible sequels and simply watch *Ocean's 11* over and over again.
RATING: ★★★★★

Classic Blu-ray

Fantastic Blu-rays you need to have in your collection

#1 L.A. Confidential

Price: £19.99 Sound: Dolby TrueHD 5.1

Director: Curtis Hanson Starring: Guy Pearce, Russell Crowe, Kim Basinger

TRAGICALLY, DIRECTOR CURTIS Hanson has never released another film that came anywhere near to the magnificence of *L.A. Confidential*. A period piece set in the City of Angels during the Forties, it made stars of Russell Crowe and Guy Pearce, gave Kim Basinger her first Academy Award and was one of the best ever adaptations of a James Ellroy novel.

Using the infamous Black Christmas murders as its backdrop, *L.A. Confidential* delivers a delicious tale of corruption and is one of the best period crime dramas ever. Supported by a magnificent supporting cast including Kevin Spacey and Danny DeVito, it was nominated for nine Academy Awards, but lost seven of them to *Titanic*.



The Blu-ray delivers an excellent transfer, cracking audio and a stunning range of extras. It's a must own title that would sit proudly in any collection.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE... The games that changed it all



METAL GEAR SOLID

Release date 3 September 1998 • Publisher Konami • Developer Konami
 Games it influenced Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell • Syphon Filter • Hitman

Many would like to credit *Metal Gear Solid* as being solely responsible for the creation of the stealth genre, but that's not entirely true. *Castle Wolfenstein*, released on the Apple II in 1981, employed stealth elements long before the first *Metal Gear* first attempted them on the MSX2 in 1987, and gamers were stalking the shadows in *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins* months before they tried to infiltrate Shadow Moses.

But what *Metal Gear Solid* did do was popularise and establish the genre as something the mainstream wanted to

games like *Uncharted* either. Hideo Kojima's game set a new standard not just for stealth gameplay but also for the cinematic experience. It became the benchmark all other developers wanted to beat. *Metal Gear Solid* had a proper environment, proper characters and a proper (if not a little convoluted) narrative tying them all together.

However, for all its seriousness, *Metal Gear Solid* was also a playfully unconventional game, one that didn't just break the fourth wall but smashed it to smithereens. Looking for Meryl's codec code on the back of the case had us stumped for hours, and swapping ports to defeat Psycho Mantis was a small slice of genius. *Metal Gear Solid* made a case for games being experimental, post-modern and self-referential.

It was an incredibly advanced game for its time, and even today it still holds up against some of the best contemporary titles. That's the mark of a great game. Not even a five-hour Codec call could turn us off of *Metal Gear Solid*.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 42 • 96%

"It's almost impossible to recommend *Metal Gear Solid* enough. The story turns your favourite game into your favourite movie, in which you play the leading role as a highly skilled, well-practised reluctant hero."

MGS popularised and established the genre as something the mainstream wanted to play

play. It made the stealth genre cool by filtering its sneak and assassinate gameplay through a cinematic lens, blending the lone hero machismo of films like *Escape From New York* with the sleek aesthetic of Japanese anime.

And what a story. Solid Snake's fateful night in Alaska has everything: love, loss, pain, action, violence, shapely bottoms – what more could you ask for? It's all told in real-time, too; there are no jump cuts or sections of missing time, making Snake's adventure feel all the more immersive and personal.

Without *Metal Gear Solid* we wouldn't have games like *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, but more to the point we wouldn't have



YOU NEVER PLAYED THIS



GITAROO MAN

Gitaroo Man is utterly demented. You play as U-1, a young boy whose talking dog, Puma, not only teaches him how to play guitar but also reveals that he's the last legendary hero of the planet Gitaroo. U-1 must transform into his titular alter ego and travel to his real home planet to save it from the evil Gravilian family led by Zowie. These enemies could be floating UFOs encircled by keyboards, a trio of skeletons that play their own bones like xylophones, or a bloke with a trumpet named Mojo King Bee who's dressed in Seventies disco attire. It sounds like the

delirious scribbles you'd find in a mental patient's notebook.

You defeat U-1's enemies by playing his Gitaroo, or, to put it more poetically, you smite them with the power of rock. It's a seemingly simple approach to the rhythm-action genre – you either trace a thick red line with the analogue stick or press the face buttons as they hit the centre of the screen, not unlike the *Dante's Inferno* Absolution minigame. The result is deadly riffs and solos that deplete your opponent's life bar. But we said *seemingly* simple for

a reason. It's actually bloody hard. Try playing the game on Master's Play once you've unlocked it. 'Impossible solos' doesn't come close to describing it.

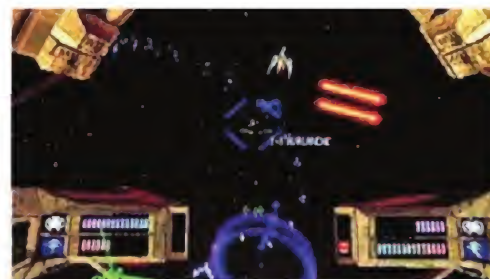
It's wonderfully weird, brilliantly addictive, and comes packed with ridiculous songs that get into your head and stay there (*Legendary Theme*, anyone?). With the game now available on PSP as *Gitaroo Man Lives!* you have no excuse for not having played it.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Final Fantasy VII

WE DOWNLOADED FFXVII when it first came out on the PSN Store. We were excited to be back in the company of *those* characters, to relive *those* scenes. Then we played it for a bit, remembered we'd seen it all before, and turned it off.



Colony Wars

REMEMBER COLONY WARS? That Psygnosis-developed space combat sim that was actually pretty good? We do. It's got a minor cult following that still demands a next-gen sequel. We'd like one, too. We can't be bothered playing the original.



Grand Theft Auto 2

Its strange, near-future setting just didn't work. GTA thrives on its urban, near-contemporary settings, and GTA 2 just didn't have that same sense of personality. We've just talked ourselves out of playing this one.



Myst

IT'S SO CLEVER! So arty! So mysterious! Surely we should go back and play it? Maybe not. It's also pretty dull – you just walk around pulling levers and prodding stones. Give us a call once you've released *'Myst VI: Guns, Babes & Booze'*.

WWII ACCORDING TO PLAYSTATION

IF PLAYSTATION IS to be believed, World War II was exciting, thrilling and full of pretty explosions and smoke effects. The beach landing at Omaha looked like something out of a movie. How exhilarating! Not harrowing, traumatic or disturbing whatsoever.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT

STAR WARS: MASTERS OF TERÄS KÄSI



FIRST, AN ADMISSION. When it found a UK release in 1998 we considered

Star Wars: Masters Of Teräs Käsi something of a guilty pleasure. We were young, *Star Wars* was the coolest thing in the world, and anything that contained Lightsabers or Darth Vader was instantly cool.

But scrape away the *Star Wars* branding and you've got a pretty terrible game. Compared to other fighters out at the time like *Soul Edge* and *Tekken 3*, *Teräs Käsi* was absolute toilet. The characters were horribly imbalanced, the stages too small, and the Lightsabers felt like baseball bats rather than swords *made out of lasers*. But still, you did get to play as Boba Fett... which makes it a ten out of ten game.





PLAY TEST
ANSWERS THE
BIG QUESTIONS

WHAT'S THE BEST GAMING STIMULANT?

On these pages, Play will conduct thoroughly scientific tests in the name of PS3 research. This month, Dave Scarborough risks his arteries to discover the Holy Grail of gaming stimulants...



NORMAL (WITHOUT STIMULANT):

WITHOUT ANY STIMULANT I kick off the proceedings with *FIFA*, wasting no time in flaunting my mediocrity. I could secure victory with neither Man U nor Inter, so switched to the trusty Germans for my only triumph.

I then battle through five different variations on *Black Ops*. Seething at a few campers, I storm to the top of the board in Team Deathmatch and take out the entire team in Hardcore: Headquarters before falling valiantly in front of my captured HQ. Kill/Death ratio: 3.21.

After a couple of rounds of Interceptor on *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*, I find myself turning an innocent child into a bile-spewing demon. Sensing the animosity, I hot-tail it over to Hot Pursuit mode, getting busted as a criminal in a modest Bentley. Outcome is mixed. ★★★★★

COFFEE

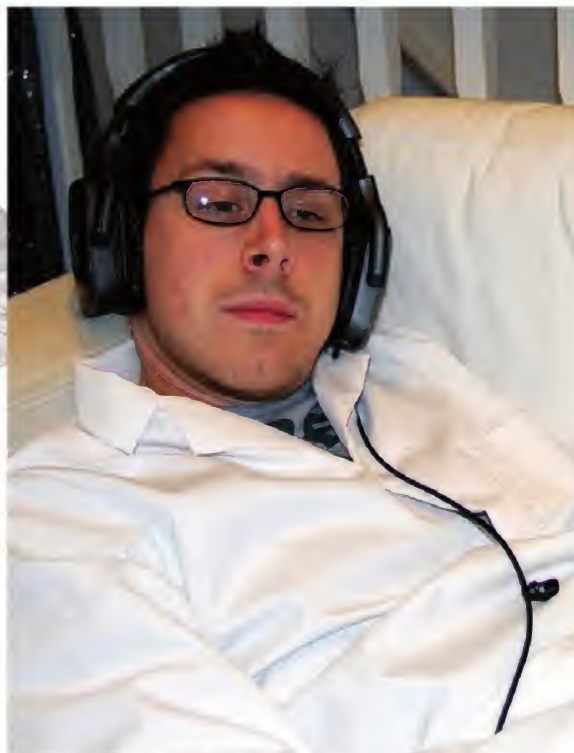


HAVING SUPPED AT the black stuff, I'm starting to feel rejuvenated. I hit *FIFA* with force. One. Two. Now three. All goals I conceded in the first game – whoops. Consume another two cups and I begin to pick up some wins.

I feel sharp on *Hot Pursuit* after another cup. Cocky, I'm tearing cop cars into pieces as I storm to first place with minimal damage as a perp. The coffee seems to be sharpening my reflexes, as I place highly in each round.

Now my bowels are beginning to rumble and after another cup my eyes feel about two inches outside of my skull. Blasting back on *Black Ops* and my KD ratio is pretty even. Overindulgence be thy sin, as I can't even rank on One In The Chamber. Nature calls... ★★★★★

EASY LISTENING MUSIC

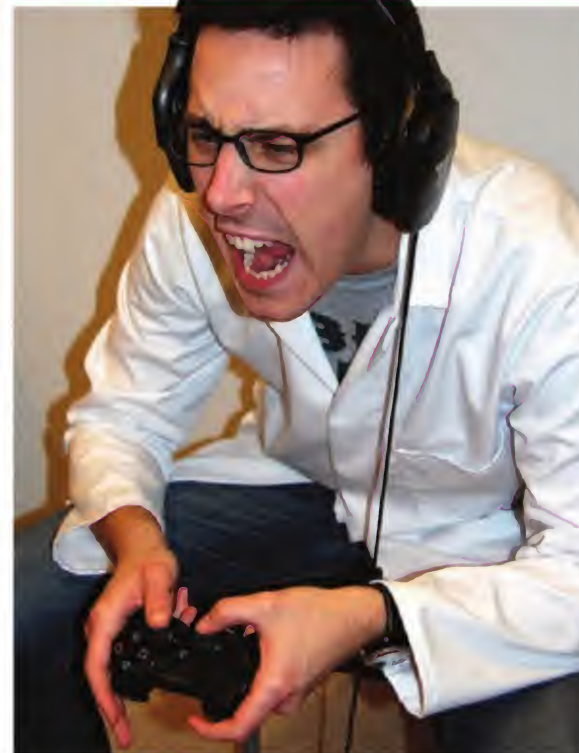


THE RELAXATION METHOD seems to be working in *Black Ops*. We're swaying from side to side like a drunken uncle at a wedding, while racking up the type of killstreaks that make adults blubber into their headsets.

Moving on and Seal comes into the mix, and playing *FIFA* feels almost an ethereal experience. The ball glides around the pitch, goals seem to come naturally and even the anger of a pent-up Scotsman shouting over the music can't dampen spirits.

Finally, I finish off with a bit of Michael Bublé. As his whopping voice rattles through my organs, I'm finding myself clinching first place in *Hot Pursuit*, as Bublé aptly bellows "Cry me a river". Bublé is god. ★★★★★

HEAVY METAL MUSIC



THE STIMULANT I expected to have the most positive effect on *Black Ops* seems fairly neutral. The contempt I usually share for my foes seems to negate the effects of Trivium's howls. KD ratio remains normal.

With the sound of Iron Maiden now blasting through my cerebral cortex, it's making for an unusual replacement for the chants of the *FIFA* grandstand. It seems to heighten my frustration at every mistimed pass, boded shot and dodgy tackle. Argh!

With *Need For Speed*, road rage is the name of the game, and screams of Pantera have me cackling manically at the sight of a wrecked cop. Score remains slightly underwhelming. ★★★★★

FAST FOOD



A BUCKET OF fried chicken is the order of the day and as the grease courses through my veins, it's a rush that translates into brutal play on the football pitch. The ball control is unprecedented from Spurs, with Crouch securing victory with a hat-trick.

Need For Speed is less fortunate. Night driving goes by in a blur and my fingers slip across the analogue stick having been bathed in chicken juice just moments earlier. As I get busted for the third round, I slip into some sort of meat-sweat state of delirium.

Attention now slipping and my bowels feeling several times their usual size, I'm repulsed by even the vision of physical exertion. Having consumed the skin of several chickens, the sight of my own turns my stomach. KD ratio takes a battering and I start hyperventilating. ★★★★★

FRUIT



STACKING UP ON the potassium, my banana goes down a treat and is perfect for steadying the hand in *Black Ops*. It makes good form on the battlefield, stringing together three consecutive ballistic knife kills, before exploding an RC-XD in a couple of unsuspecting enemies' faces. KD goes a couple of notches up to over 5.00.

Munching on a juicy Braeburn, I'm feeling refreshed for *FIFA*. I'm knocking the ball around, managing to scrape a draw as Inter versus Milan. I also gain another win, before England let me down on the international stage.

Having knocked back a smoothie, my senses feel sharp for *Hot Pursuit*, uncovering hidden paths and thundering to the finish in first. As the Law, I'm just as successful, busting two criminals before sailing past the finish line in second. Feeling good. ★★★★★

ENERGY DRINK



NECKING WHAT LOOKS like toxic liquid and tastes like cat piss, I'm instantly buzzed for some football action. The intensity is interspersed with the constant need to visit the loo – a task made hard with *FIFA*'s slim pause time. This leaves me defenceless. I draw one and lose two.

By the time I hit an Interceptor match on *Hot Pursuit*, I've downed a further can. The short bursts of adrenaline are perfect for the arcade thrills. My hand begins to shake involuntarily and I miss a couple of EMP attacks. I win more than I lose, so it's a minor triumph.

Drinking a couple more cans, I'm playing *Black Ops* and feeling as edgy as anyone in a real warzone. The hand trembling is proving a problem. Kill. Dead. Dead. My left eye is beginning to twitch. Dead. Dead. Kill. Dead. Dead. Crap. Man, I feel juiced. ★★★★★

BONUS QUESTION #1
Does PS3 work in a forest?



ANSWER: No

CONCLUSION: EASY LISTENING MUSIC and fruit were by far the best stimulants, relaxing the mind over an extended period of time. However, after indulging in excesses of energy drinks, coffee and fast food, most of my organs have rotted and, even worse, my win/lose ratio plummeted.

OVERALL: Maximise potential by sticking to the good stuff. I'm off to A+E.



MAKING THE FIRST MOVE

PlayStation Move has been available for five months now, and we're still yet to see any truly great software that really exploits the controller's strengths. Here are 20 examples of the kind of games that have been released for Move so far:



TIME CRISIS: RAZING STORM

THREE TIME CRISIS games for the price of one might seem like a good offer, but when you discover two of the games are unrepentantly bad that VFM takes a drastic nosedive. The Move integration is poor, too; we left wishing for a Guncon 3. We never thought we'd be writing that. ★★☆☆☆



RESIDENT EVIL 5: GOLD EDITION

RESIDENT EVIL 5 is riddled with small, niggling problems, but it's still a great game and Mercenaries mode is as brilliant as ever. The Move implementation actually works rather well with the third-person perspective, making those headshots all the more easy to come by. Also, you get to play as Barry Burton. SOLD. ★★★★★



TV SUPERSTARS

AH. TV SUPERSTARS. Mm. After we'd finished having a giggle at being able to place our own handsome visages into the game via the PlayStation Eye, we realised there really wasn't much else about TV Superstars to smile at. There are only five minigames, and they're all rubbish. Avoid at all costs. ★★☆☆☆



START THE PARTY

YES, PARTY GAMES are as shallow as they come, but Start The Party manages to hit all the right notes. It makes intuitive use of the Move controller and the controls are tight and responsive. It's just a pity that, as with most Move party games, it's a relatively short-lived experience. ★★☆☆☆



THE SHOOT

WE WONDER HOW long it took them to come up with that title during the game's marketing meeting? In The Shoot you shoot things. And, to be honest, that's about it. It's nicely made and entertaining for the few short hours it lasts, but it's hardly the must-have experience that's going to shift Move units. ★★☆☆☆



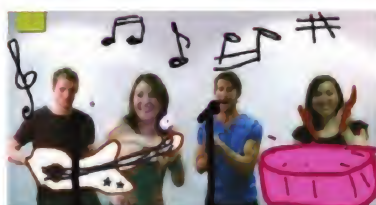
LBP 2: SACKBOY'S PREHISTORIC MOVES

SACKBOY'S PREHISTORIC MOVES sees one Move-equipped player help a player-controlled Sackboy traverse levels by removing obstacles. When Move gets implemented into the main game we can only imagine what the community will be able to come up with. ★★★★★



KUNG FU RIDER

IT'S AN INSANE concept – roll down a hill on an office chair/baby walker/ceremonial drum/whatever else at extremely high speeds – and it can offer up some great arcade fun. However, often unresponsive controls and a sheer lack of content means any entertainment you get from Kung Fu Rider is brief at best. ★★☆☆☆



BEAT SKETCHER

IN BEAT SKETCHER you use the Move controller to draw pictures in time to music. It sounds simple, but its rewards are great. You can also input your own photos, play noughts and crosses, or basically draw whatever you want. It's an incredibly fun game that really shows off the hardware's best features. ★★★★★



HEAVY RAIN: MOVE EDITION

IF WE'RE HONEST we never really saw much point in adding Move controls to Heavy Rain. If anything the novelty factor of Move detracts from the ambitious nature of the narrative design and story. At least you can still play Heavy Rain: Move Edition using the pad. It's much, much better that way. ★★☆☆☆



DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION

THERE WAS A time when the *DDR* series was innovative, fresh, and exciting, and even we got up off our fat behinds to dance like idiots. *DDR* for Move has had none of that effect on us. Move functionality is limp, making this feel like a lazy port rather than anything new or worthwhile. ★★☆☆☆



SINGSTAR DANCE

FOR A LOWLY £20 *SingStar Dance* isn't asking for much. It's the logical next step for anyone who already owns every other *SingStar* game ever released (you crazy person, you). It's not the most amazing dance game available, but it's fun, accessible, well produced and makes good use of Move. ★★☆☆☆



MAG

MAG... DOES ANYONE even care any more? Not even the implementation of Move saw any resurgence of interest, and it's easy to see why: you simply don't have the same kind of accuracy with Move as you do with a pad, making it pretty pointless. We're still interested to see what Zipper Interactive does with Move in *SOCOM 4*, though. ★★☆☆☆



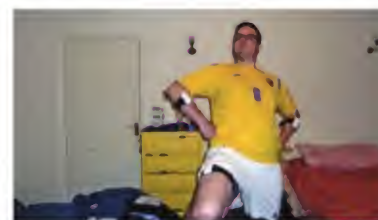
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST

£49.99 IS PROBABLY a little steep for what is basically a port of a Wii game, particularly when little has been done to exploit the more precise motion control movements of Move. Still, it's nicely put together and the game reads your movements well. ★★☆☆☆



SPORTS CHAMPIONS

THERE HAD TO be some kind of sports minigame collection included with the launch of Move – without it Sony's version of Nintendo's Wii wouldn't be complete. It is one of the best Move games available, though; its impressively precise gesture recognition makes for genuinely good fun. It's the second best Move game after *echochrome II*. ★★☆☆☆



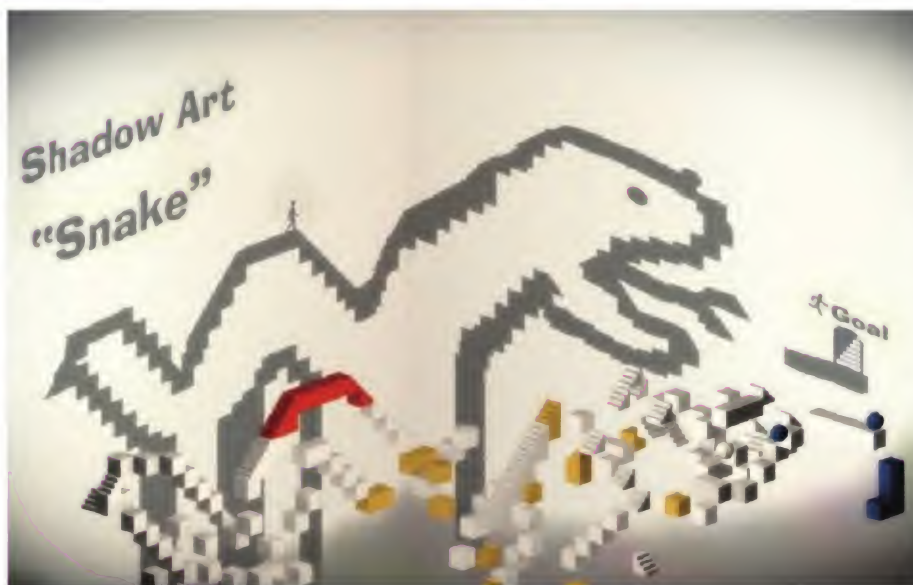
EA SPORTS ACTIVE 2

A WORKOUT GAME, and a half-decent one at that. Online elements allow you to compare your exercise levels with other people's. Ian's currently documenting his experiences with the game in Fitness Quest IX, which can be read in the news section. Update: He's not doing very well at the moment. ★★☆☆☆



EYEPET: MOVE EDITION

IT GOES WITHOUT saying that if you didn't like the non-Move edition of *EyePet* chances are you're not going to like the Move version either. It remains a pet simulator at heart, adding very little to the original formula. You can have some very immature fun with it though; just check out the video on play-mag.co.uk at <http://bit.ly/g4xCH8>. ★★☆☆☆



ECHOCHROME II

IT'S QUITE A brave choice to completely alter the formula of a game for its sequel, but that's what happened with the new focus on light and shadow in *echochrome II*. Thankfully, it works. The pick-up-and-play implementation of Move is flawless, and the puzzles are even more devilishly ingenious than in *echochrome I*. Arguably the first – and only – great Move game. ★★★★★



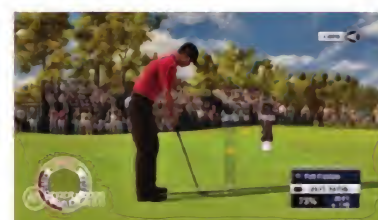
THE FIGHT: LIGHTS OUT

WHEN THE CONCEPT of motion-controlled games was first revealed to the public, we all immediately thought of fight simulators (after Lightsabers, of course). *The Fight* is an early attempt at such a simulator, but is also a glaring example of why it's not necessarily the best use of the hardware. Calibration and tracking issues mean this is more irritating than satisfying. ★★☆☆☆



R.U.S.E.

ONE OF 2010'S less anticipated sleeper hits, *R.U.S.E.*'s approach to the real-time-strategy game was refreshingly unique. It was also the first RTS to make use of motion controls, using Move's gesture and pointer controls to add a new level of fluidity to the genre. Move was a natural fit for *R.U.S.E.*. ★★★★★



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

WITHOUT PLAYSTATION MOVE this is a pretty pointless 'update' to the series, as it does little to update anything at all. With Move support it's a more worthwhile golfing experience. If you're fed up with *Tiger Woods*, *John Daly's ProStroke Golf* is a commendable alternative. ★★☆☆☆

PLAY# PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



This just in: hackers have hacked something in a hacky fashion.

Public response has so far been negative.



We have come into possession of exclusive footage of a hacker doing their hacky thing. Viewer discretion is advised.



I'm hack, hack, hack hack hacking.



AIEEEEE!!

PS3 LISTING

| game | issue | score |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|
| 3D Collection | 195 | 75% |
| 3D Dot Game Heroes | 192 | 87% |
| 50 Cent: Blood On The Sand | 177 | 70% |
| Afro Samurai | 177 | 61% |
| Agarest: Generations Of War | 187 | 78% |
| Alpha Protocol | 193 | 83% |
| Aliens Vs Predator | 189 | 79% |
| Alone In The Dark | 173 | 70% |
| Armored Core For Answer | 173 | 65% |
| Armored Core 4 | 153 | 67% |
| Army Of Two | 164 | 80% |
| Army Of Two: The 40th Day | 188 | 65% |
| Ashes Cricket 2009 | 183 | 30% |
| Assassin's Creed | 161 | 58% |
| Assassin's Creed II | 186 | 89% |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood | 199 | 91% |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|



More than enough additions to take the *Assassin's Creed* formula into modern classic territory.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland | 198 | 77% |
| Backbreaker | 193 | 70% |
| Band Hero | 187 | 68% |
| Batman: Arkham Asylum | 183 | 85% |
| Battle Fantasia | 176 | 67% |
| Battlefield: Bad Company | 168 | 78% |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Battlefield: Bad Company 2 | 190 | 93% |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|



Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.

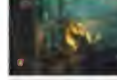
| | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Bayonetta* | 187 | 93% |
|-------------------|-----|-----|



The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| Beijing 2008 | 168 | 54% |
| Beowulf | 161 | 61% |
| Bionic Commando | 179 | 82% |

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| BioShock | 172 | 93% |
|-----------------|-----|-----|



This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| BioShock 2 | 189 | 88% |
| BlackSite | 163 | 43% |
| Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War | 160 | 58% |
| BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger | 190 | 85% |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| BlazBlue: Continuum Shift | 198 | 94% |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|



With its diverse roster, stunning visuals and furiously paced gameplay, *Continuum Shift* is a must-have for beat-'em-up fans.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Blazing Angels | 151 | 54% |
| Blitz: The League II | 172 | 67% |
| Blur | 193 | 86% |
| Borderlands | 185 | 80% |
| Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway | 171 | 75% |
| Brütal Legend | 185 | 79% |
| Burnout Paradise | 162 | 74% |
| Buzz!: Quiz TV | 168 | 82% |
| Buzz!: Quiz World | 185 | 70% |
| Call Of Duty 3 | 151 | 77% |
| Call Of Duty: World At War | 173 | 68% |
| Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare | 160 | 88% |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Call Of Duty: Black Ops | 199 | 94% |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|



Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood | 181 | 85% |
| Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow | 197 | 85% |
| Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena | 178 | 87% |

| game | issue | score |
|------|-------|-------|
|------|-------|-------|

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Civilization Revolution | 168 | 90% |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|



The popular PC series makes its way to the PS3, so you can while away your hours playing this instead of doing important things.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|
| Clash Of The Titans | 193 | 65% |
| Clive Barker's Jericho | 159 | 84% |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|
| Colin McRae: DiRT | 158 | 91% |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|



Quite simply the second-best rally game on the PS3. Still, if simulation is what you're after then go for this over *Sega Rally*.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Colin McRae: DiRT 2 | 184 | 87% |
| Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3 | 178 | 65% |
| Conan | 160 | 71% |
| Condemned 2 | 165 | 78% |
| Conflict: Denied Ops | 164 | 50% |
| Create | 199 | 71% |
| Cross Edge | 182 | 59% |
| Damnation | 181 | 38% |
| Dance Dance Revolution | 201 | 52% |
| Dante's Inferno | 189 | 80% |
| Dark Sector | 165 | 62% |
| Dark Void | 188 | 81% |
| Darksiders | 188 | 83% |
| Dead Rising 2 | 197 | 78% |
| Dead Space | 172 | 87% |

| | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| Dead Space 2 | 201 | 92% |
|---------------------|-----|-----|



The point where the *Dead Space* series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Dead To Rights: Retribution | 192 | 68% |
| Def Jam: Icon | 151 | 79% |
| Def Jam Rapstar | 199 | 72% |

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|
| Demon's Souls | 193 | 92% |
|----------------------|-----|-----|



As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon | 178 | 29% |
| Devil May Cry 4 | 163 | 89% |
| Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice | 175 | 81% |

| | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| DJ Hero | 186 | 91% |
|----------------|-----|-----|



It's just like playing *Guitar Hero* for the first time all over again, although *DJ Hero* is slightly more expensive.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| DJ Hero 2 | 198 | 88% |
| Dragon Age: Origins | 186 | 82% |
| Dragon Ball: Raging Blast | 186 | 40% |
| Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit | 168 | 61% |
| Dynasty Warriors: Gundam | 160 | 40% |
| Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2 | 176 | 43% |
| Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce | 189 | 37% |
| Dynasty Warriors 6 | 164 | 30% |
| Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires | 181 | 44% |
| EA Sports Active 2 | 200 | 81% |
| EA Sports MMA | 198 | 89% |
| Eat Lead | 178 | 38% |
| Enchanted Arms | 152 | 69% |
| Enemy Territory: Quake Wars | 168 | 60% |
| Enslaved: Odyssey To The West | 197 | 83% |
| Eternal Sonata | 176 | 87% |
| Everybody's Golf 5* | 158 | 88% |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Everybody's Golf: World Tour | 165 | 91% |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|



The most recent *Tiger Woods* game may have been rubbish, but don't worry because *Everybody's Golf* is bloody brilliant.

| | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|
| Eye Of Judgment | 159 | 65% |
| EyePet | 185 | 83% |
| EyePet: Move | 197 | 84% |
| F1 2010 | 197 | 86% |
| FaceBreaker | 170 | 55% |
| Fairytale Fights | 186 | 51% |

| | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|
| Fallout 3 | 173 | 97% |
|------------------|-----|-----|



Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.

| game | issue | score |
|------|-------|-------|
|------|-------|-------|

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Fallout: New Vegas | 198 | 88% |
| Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer | 155 | 39% |
| Far Cry 2 | 172 | 74% |
| F.E.A.R. | 151 | 81% |
| F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin | 176 | 87% |
| FIFA 08 | 159 | 84% |
| FIFA 09 | 171 | 87% |

| | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| FIFA 10 | 184 | 90% |
|----------------|-----|-----|



The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by *PES* seems like so long ago now.

| | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| FIFA 11 | 197 | 91% |
|----------------|-----|-----|



FIFA continues to improve and continues to dominate with this latest addition to the superior footy franchise.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| FIFA Street 3 | 163 | 66% |
| FIFA World Cup 2010 | 192 | 70% |
| Fight Night Round 3 | 151 | 87% |
| Fight Night Round 4 | 181 | 84% |
| Final Fantasy XIII | 190 | 85% |
| Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage | 198 | 51% |
| Folklore | 158 | 66% |
| Formula One Championship Edition | 151 | 72% |
| Fracture | 171 | 72% |
| Front Mission Evolved | 198 | 52% |
| Fuel | 180 | 49% |
| Full Auto 2: Battlelines | 151 | 69% |
| G-Force | 183 | 59% |
| Genji: Days Of The Blade | 151 | 38% |
| Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 | 157 | 83% |
| Ghostbusters: The Videogame | 180 | 80% |
| GI Joe | 183 | 22% |

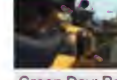
| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| God Of War Collection* | 188 | 93% |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|



Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|
| God Of War III | 190 | 88% |
| Gran Turismo 5 | 200 | 85% |
| Gran Turismo 5 Prologue | 165 | 75% |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Grand Theft Auto IV | 166 | 98% |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|



If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|
| Green Day: Rock Band | 194 | 77% |
|----------------------|-----|-----|

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| GTA: Episodes From Liberty City | 191 | 94% |
|--|-----|-----|



Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for *GTA IV* to play them. What more could you want.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|
| Guitar Hero III | 160 | 90% |
|------------------------|-----|-----|



Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Guitar Hero 5 | 184 | 81% |
| Guitar Hero: Aerosmith | 168 | 63% |
| Guitar Hero Greatest Hits | 182 | 76% |
| Guitar Hero Metallica | 179 | 88% |
| Guitar Hero: Van Halen | 189 | 65% |
| Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock | 197 | 71% |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Guitar Hero World Tour | 173 | 95% |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|



World Tour just about manages to trump rival *Rock Band* with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1 | 200 | 21% |
| Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince | 182 | 60% |
| Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix | 155 | 32% |
| Haze | 167 | 64% |
| Heavenly Sword | 157 | 71% |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Heavy Rain | 189 | 94% |
|-------------------|-----|-----|



It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Heavy Rain: Move Edition | 198 | 70% |
| Heroes Over Europe | 184 | 48% |
| Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs | 182 | 47% |

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey | 183 | 72% |
| inFamous | 180 | 81% |
| International Cricket 2010 | 194 | 61% |
| Iron Man | 166 | 58% |
| Iron Man 2 | 193 | 50% |
| Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier | 187 | 59% |
| James Bond 007: Blood Stone | 199 | 63% |
| James Cameron's Avatar: The Game | 187 | 64% |
| John Daly's ProStroke Golf | 197 | 70% |
| Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights | 159 | 78% |
| Just Cause 2 | 190 | 87% |
| Kane & Lynch: Dead Men | 160 | 73% |
| Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days | 196 | 71% |
| Katamari Forever | 184 | 88% |
| Killzone 2 | 176 | 93% |
| Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever. | | |
| Kung Fu Rider | 196 | 65% |
| Lair | 158 | 52% |
| Last Rebellion | 191 | 42% |
| Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon | 174 | 54% |
| Legendary | 173 | 62% |
| Lego Batman | 173 | 65% |
| Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4 | 194 | 79% |
| Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures | 167 | 73% |
| Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues | 187 | 71% |
| Lego Rock Band | 187 | 75% |
| Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga | 160 | 76% |
| Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust | 180 | 24% |
| LittleBigPlanet | 172 | 94% |
| Create, share and play Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer. | | |
| LittleBigPlanet 2 | 201 | 96% |
| An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff. | | |
| Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest | 199 | 60% |
| Lost Planet 2 | 192 | 75% |
| Lost Planet: Extreme Condition | 163 | 69% |
| Lost: The Video Game | 164 | 38% |
| LOTR: Conquest | 175 | 52% |
| Madden NFL 07 | 151 | 82% |
| Madden NFL 08 | 157 | 82% |
| Madden NFL 09 | 170 | 83% |
| Madden NFL 10 | 184 | 82% |
| Madden NFL 11 | 196 | 84% |
| Mafia II | 196 | 81% |
| MAG | 189 | 68% |
| Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom | 199 | 72% |
| Marvel Ultimate Alliance | 151 | 64% |
| Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2 | 185 | 57% |
| Mass Effect 2 | 201 | 97% |
| Why the hell are you reading this when you should be playing Mass Effect 2 instead? GO GO GO. | | |
| Medal Of Honor | 198 | 86% |
| Medal Of Honor Airborne | 161 | 85% |
| Mercenaries 2: World In Flames | 171 | 78% |
| Metal Gear Solid 4 | 167 | 92% |
| Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible. | | |
| Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire | 151 | 37% |
| Modern Warfare 2 | 186 | 94% |
| A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played. | | |
| Midnight Club: Los Angeles | 173 | 84% |
| Mini Ninjas | 184 | 80% |
| Mirror's Edge | 173 | 71% |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|
| LittleBigPlanet 2 PS3 | 96% | Kung-Fu Live PSN | 42% |
| Dead Space 2 PS3 | 92% | Worms Battle Islands PSN | 80% |
| Mass Effect 2 PS3 | 97% | Beat Sketcher PSN | 85% |
| Dance Dance Revolution PS3 | 52% | Alien Breed 2: Assault PSN | 82% |
| nail'd PS3 | 61% | | |
| Dead Nation PSN | 86% | | |
| Funky Lab Rat PSN | 70% | | |

| game | issue | score |
|--|------------|------------|
| ModNation Racers | 192 | 90% |
| The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too. | | |
| Monster Madness | 170 | 78% |
| Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe | 173 | 68% |
| MotoGP 08 | 172 | 65% |
| MotoGP 09/10 | 190 | 77% |
| MotorStorm | 151 | 92% |
| With the addition of an online multiplayer, MotorStorm gets the score it deserves, and currently leads the lines for the next gen. | | |
| MotorStorm: Pacific Rift | 172 | 93% |
| With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, Pacific Rift amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title. | | |
| MX Vs ATV Reflex | 189 | 68% |
| MX Vs ATV Untamed | 164 | 58% |
| nail'd | 201 | 61% |
| Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm | 174 | 59% |
| NASCAR 08 | 157 | 38% |
| Naughty Bear | 195 | 64% |
| NBA 07 | 153 | 33% |
| NBA 2K7 | 151 | 76% |
| NBA 2K8 | 172 | 71% |
| NBA 2K10 | 186 | 79% |
| NBA 2K11 | 199 | 82% |
| NBA Jam | 200 | 68% |
| NBA Live 08 | 158 | 59% |
| NBA Live 09 | 170 | 81% |
| NBA Street: Homecourt | 151 | 68% |
| Need For Speed Carbon | 151 | 76% |
| Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit | 199 | 91% |
| Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form. | | |
| Need For Speed ProStreet | 161 | 86% |
| Need For Speed Shift | 184 | 81% |
| Need For Speed Undercover | 173 | 75% |
| Nier | 192 | 54% |
| NHL 2K7 | 151 | 80% |
| NHL 2K9 | 172 | 67% |
| NHL 2K10 | 186 | 70% |
| NHL 09 | 170 | 88% |
| NHL 10 | 184 | 85% |
| NHL 11 | 198 | 89% |
| Ninja Gaiden Sigma | 154 | 88% |
| Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 | 184 | 82% |
| Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising | 185 | 78% |
| Overlord: Raising Hell | 167 | 65% |
| Overlord II | 181 | 68% |
| Pain | 183 | 69% |
| PES 2008 | 159 | 70% |
| PES 2009 | 172 | 80% |
| PES 2010 | 185 | 72% |
| PES 2011 | 197 | 73% |
| PixelJunk Racers | 160 | 74% |
| POTC: At World's End | 154 | 48% |
| Prince Of Persia | 174 | 83% |
| Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands | 193 | 68% |
| Prince Of Persia Trilogy | 200 | 88% |
| Prison Break: The Conspiracy | 191 | 40% |
| Prototype | 181 | 76% |
| Pure | 171 | 80% |
| Pure Football | 194 | 69% |
| Quantum Of Solace | 175 | 57% |
| Quantum Theory | 197 | 29% |
| Race Driver: GRID | 167 | 85% |
| Racket Sports | 198 | 37% |
| Rainbow Six Vegas | 155 | 88% |
| Rainbow Six Vegas 2 | 164 | 78% |
| Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time | 186 | 82% |
| Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction | 160 | 72% |

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| Red Dead Redemption | 193 | 92% |
| Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result. | | |
| Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare | 199 | 87% |
| Red Faction: Guerrilla | 180 | 80% |
| Resident Evil 5 | 177 | 86% |
| Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition | 190 | 86% |
| Resistance: Fall Of Man | 151 | 83% |
| Resistance 2 | 173 | 90% |
| With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3 | | |
| Resonance Of Fate | 191 | 79% |
| Ridge Racer 7 | 151 | 75% |
| Rise Of The Argonauts | 176 | 58% |
| Rock Band | 169 | 94% |
| Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers. | | |
| Rock Band 2 | 179 | 96% |
| With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available. | | |
| Rock Band 3 | 199 | 84% |
| Rogue Warrior | 188 | 09% |
| R.U.S.E. | 197 | 82% |
| Sacred 2: Fallen Angel | 180 | 76% |
| Saints Row 2 | 172 | 79% |
| Saw | 186 | 52% |
| Saw II: Flesh & Blood | 198 | 36% |
| Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection | 177 | 85% |
| SBK 08 | 172 | 55% |
| SBK X: Superbike World Championship | 193 | 67% |
| Sega Rally | 158 | 92% |
| Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really. | | |
| Sega Superstars Tennis | 165 | 68% |
| Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes | 198 | 76% |
| Shaun White Skateboarding | 198 | 70% |
| Shaun White Snowboarding | 173 | 72% |
| Shellshock 2: Blood Trails | 177 | 32% |
| Silent Hill: Homecoming | 174 | 64% |
| Simpsons Game | 160 | 82% |
| SingStar | 159 | 80% |
| Singstar Guitar | 199 | 70% |
| SingStar Pop Edition | 179 | 81% |
| Singularity | 195 | 80% |
| Skate | 159 | 86% |
| Skate 2 | 175 | 82% |
| Skate 3 | 192 | 86% |
| Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing | 190 | 78% |
| Sonic The Hedgehog | 151 | 52% |
| Sonic Unleashed | 175 | 48% |
| Soul Calibur IV | 169 | 94% |
| Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil Soul Calibur IV. Another wonderful addition to the franchise. | | |
| Spider-Man 3 | 155 | 33% |
| Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions | 197 | 69% |
| Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows | 173 | 55% |
| Splatterhouse | 200 | 58% |
| Splinter Cell Double Agent | 153 | 79% |
| Split/Second: Velocity | 192 | 90% |
| Just beating Blur to the chequered flag, Split/Second is a wonderfully intense racing game in the Burnout mould. | | |
| Sports Champions | 196 | 83% |
| Star Ocean: The Last Hope International | 190 | 63% |
| Star Wars: The Force Unleashed | 171 | 65% |
| Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II | 199 | 61% |
| Start The Party! | 196 | 72% |

*denotes import review

PLAY'S DIARY



DAY 3: Ian treats himself to a late non-denominational holiday season present, purchasing a tool kit (including glue gun). The joy on his fat face is etched there for days as he examines the new possibilities (ie 'things to glue') opened to him.



DAY 12: Tiring of Ian's cries that he would "build some stuff that's really good, like", the Play team go and purchase themselves tool kits of their own. Chris's is exceptionally masculine, though it doesn't have a glue gun. Ryan is sad.



DAY 13: After mucking about with his magnetic picker-upper tool far too much for everyone in the office to handle, Jon is stripped of his tool kit privileges. The ban on his owning or handling of tools still stands to this day.



DAY 23: Tool kits soon became the new religion around the whole Imagine office, taking over from Flying Spaghetti Monsterism as the faith of choice. Voices dissenting that there are 'too many' toolkits are silenced. The era of glue gun enlightenment begins.



DAY 28: Realising they've spent the entire month dicking about with hammers and stuff, the Play team quickly return to the job at hand, producing one of the most finely crafted (literally) issues you've ever seen. And without even having to use a glue gun.

Dried fruit vs Sopping wet fruit



Dried Fruit

THE BASIC THINKING behind dried fruit is to take fruit – the bounty of nature and that which will keep us alive if we ever get stuck in the wilderness – and make it worse. Removing moisture from a fruit – turning grapes into raisins and rhubarb into whatever the hell the above is – is dumb.

There are practical uses for dried fruit, in that it lasts a long time and therefore could be taken on trips into the wilderness (though as we've already pointed out, nature is bountiful with fruity delights). If it wasn't for this minor saving grace, we would have to mark dried fruit much lower.

Some saving graces and some elements that will keep fans hooked, but most of us will see no point in this waste of time – fruit barons should not be playing God with our planet's produce.

4/10



Sopping wet fruit

THE EXACT OPPOSITE of dried is sopping wet, so what better to compare prunes and their ilk to? We got a few peaches, apples and bananas (technically not fruits) and submerged them in water. Even hindered by this newly sopping state of being, the normal fruits far outperformed their dried compatriots.

But even avoiding comparisons to their poorer, drier compatriots, sopping wet fruit is something of true quality. Any type of thing in the world that can count clementines in its ranks has a good shot of being The Best Thing In The World, after all.

The mark would have been the perfect ten, but seeing as we had to mark sopping wet peaches it had to be docked. They were just *too wet*. Still, a great performance from nature's candy.

9/10

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| Stormrise | 178 | 51% |
| Stranglehold | 159 | 65% |
| Street Fighter IV | 176 | 95% |
| The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs. | | |
| Stuntman: Ignition | 157 | 82% |
| SuperCar Challenge | 183 | 66% |
| Superstars V8: Next Challenge | 190 | 55% |
| Superstars V8 Racing | 181 | 63% |
| Super Street Fighter IV | 191 | 90% |
| The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made. | | |
| Tekken 6 | 184 | 94% |
| There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i> , stops Tekken 6 from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game. | | |
| The Beatles: Rock Band | 184 | 96% |
| It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product. | | |
| The Bourne Conspiracy | 168 | 72% |
| The Club | 163 | 80% |
| The Darkness | 154 | 91% |
| This unique FPS combines the best bits of Mafia and war films along with some highly innovative gameplay elements. | | |
| The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion | 152 | 91% |
| This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, Oblivion is an awesome game. | | |
| The Fight | 199 | 42% |
| The Godfather | 151 | 37% |
| The Godfather II | 178 | 38% |
| The Golden Compass | 162 | 32% |
| The Incredible Hulk | 168 | 52% |
| The King Of Fighters XII | 182 | 82% |
| The Orange Box | 161 | 93% |
| Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. Absolutely nothing. | | |
| The Saboteur | 187 | 67% |
| The Shoot | 199 | 76% |
| The Sims 3 | 199 | 87% |
| The Sly Collection | 200 | 84% |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07 | 151 | 88% |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08 | 158 | 73% |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 | 171 | 86% |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 | 181 | 69% |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 | 194 | 60% |
| Time Crisis 4 | 166 | 69% |
| Time Crisis: Razing Storm | 199 | 58% |
| TimeShift | 162 | 72% |
| TNA Impact! | 171 | 71% |
| Tom Clancy's EndWar | 173 | 80% |
| Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X | 177 | 75% |
| Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 | 196 | 69% |
| Tomb Raider: Underworld | 173 | 83% |
| Tony Hawk's Project 8 | 151 | 85% |
| Tony Hawk's Proving Ground | 160 | 72% |
| Tony Hawk: Ride | 188 | 52% |
| Top Spin 3 | 168 | 71% |
| Tornado Outbreak | 186 | 56% |
| Toy Story 3 | 195 | 82% |
| Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen | 182 | 41% |
| Transformers: The Game | 156 | 34% |
| Transformers: War For Cybertron | 194 | 80% |
| Trinity Universe | 194 | 61% |
| Tron Evolution | 200 | 17% |
| Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty | 165 | 40% |
| Turok | 163 | 46% |
| TV Superstars | 199 | 53% |
| UEFA EURO 2008 | 165 | 62% |
| UFC Undisputed 2009 | 180 | 90% |
| Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages. | | |
| UFC Undisputed 2010 | 193 | 88% |
| Uncharted: Drake's Fortune | 161 | 87% |
| Uncharted 2: Among Thieves | 185 | 96% |
| Among Thieves has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years. | | |

| game | issue | score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Unreal Tournament III | 162 | 88% |
| Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom | 151 | 54% |
| Valkyria Chronicles | 173 | 82% |
| Vancouver 2010 | 189 | 76% |
| Vanquish | 197 | 93% |
| A brilliant surprise from the developer of Bayonetta and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010. | | |
| Viking: Battle For Asgard | 165 | 74% |
| Virtua Fighter 5 | 151 | 83% |
| Virtua Tennis 2009 | 180 | 80% |
| Virtua Tennis 3 | 150 | 91% |
| Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple. | | |
| Wanted: Weapons Of Fate | 179 | 63% |
| Warhawk | 157 | 84% |
| Watchmen: The End Is Nigh | 183 | 55% |
| Way Of The Samurai 3 | 190 | 16% |
| Wet | 184 | 41% |
| Wheelman | 178 | 72% |
| Where The Wild Things Are | 188 | 56% |
| White Knight Chronicles | 190 | 55% |
| Wolfenstein | 183 | 72% |
| World Snooker Championship 2007 | 151 | 56% |
| WRC: FIA World Rally Championship | 197 | 76% |
| WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship | 177 | 67% |
| WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania | 178 | 80% |
| WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008 | 159 | 88% |
| WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009 | 173 | 74% |
| WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010 | 185 | 77% |
| WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011 | 199 | 63% |
| X-Blades | 178 | 54% |
| X-Men Origins: Wolverine | 179 | 71% |
| Yakuza 3 | 191 | 80% |
| Yakuza 4* | 193 | 75% |

PS STORE LISTING

| | | |
|---|------------|------------|
| 1942: Joint Strike | 170 | 74% |
| 3-On-3 NHL Arcade | 177 | 62% |
| After Burner Climax | 193 | 91% |
| Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for. | | |
| Age Of Booty | 172 | 81% |
| Alien Breed: Impact | 196 | 80% |
| Alien Breed 2: Assault | 201 | 82% |
| Anarchy: Rush Hour | 194 | 73% |
| Aqua Panic | 193 | 68% |
| Battlefield 1943 | 182 | 89% |
| Beat Sketcher | 201 | 85% |
| Bishi Bashi Special! | 175 | 61% |
| Bionic Commando Rearmed | 169 | 88% |
| Blacklight: Tango Down | 200 | 64% |
| Blade Kitten | 197 | 72% |
| Blast Factor | 152 | 72% |
| Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I | 188 | 65% |
| Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II | 188 | 61% |
| Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6 | 193 | 70% |
| Bomberman Ultra | 185 | 82% |
| Braid | 188 | 93% |
| We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for Braid. Simply brilliant. | | |
| Burn Zombie Burn | 178 | 85% |
| Call Of Duty Classic | 188 | 90% |
| It doesn't have MW2's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right. | | |
| Calling All Cars | 155 | 81% |
| Castle Crashers | 200 | 88% |
| Catan | 195 | 85% |
| Comet Crash | 186 | 84% |
| Command & Conquer: Red Alert | 168 | 70% |
| Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation | 176 | 55% |
| Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge | 185 | 68% |
| Command & Conquer | 175 | 44% |

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| Cool Boarders | 173 | 57% |
| Cool Boarders 2 | 175 | 31% |
| Costume Quest | 199 | 70% |
| Crash Bandicoot | 172 | 77% |
| Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped | 174 | 82% |
| Crash Commando | 174 | 80% |
| Crash Team Racing | 170 | 79% |
| Crazy Taxi | 200 | 80% |
| Crescent Pale Mist | 200 | 70% |
| Critter Crunch | 188 | 91% |
| This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play. | | |
| Crystal Defenders | 184 | 48% |
| Dark Mist | 164 | 53% |
| Dead Nation | 201 | 86% |
| Dead Space: Ignition | 199 | 47% |
| DeathSpank | 195 | 83% |
| Destruction Derby | 01 | 80% |
| .detuned | 186 | 50% |
| Digger HD | 186 | 52% |
| Diner Dash | 190 | 66% |
| Driver | 171 | 90% |
| With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, Driver made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title. | | |
| Droplitz | 184 | 91% |
| Droplitz is a superb puzzler that blends Rez-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years. | | |
| Earthworm Jim HD | 196 | 89% |
| echochrome | 169 | 85% |
| Elefunk | 170 | 45% |
| Everybody's Golf 2 | 62 | 83% |
| Fade To Black | 09 | 44% |
| Fat Princess | 183 | 65% |
| Fatal Inertia EX | 168 | 65% |
| FIFA 09 Ultimate Team | 178 | 61% |
| Final Fight: Double Impact | 193 | 90% |
| This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list. | | |
| Final Fantasy VII | 181 | 96% |
| Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997. | | |
| Final Fantasy VIII | 190 | 90% |
| A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download. | | |
| Final Fantasy IX | 195 | 90% |
| Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again. | | |
| Flight Control HD | 198 | 85% |
| Flock! | 179 | 70% |
| fOw | 151 | 90% |
| Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. fOw is an innovative title available on the Network. | | |
| Flower | 176 | 85% |
| Frogger Returns | 190 | 35% |
| Funky Lab Rat | 201 | 70% |
| G-Police | 27 | 84% |
| Geon | 175 | 71% |
| Go! Puzzle | 152 | 58% |
| Gran Turismo HD | 150 | 75% |
| Gravity Crash | 187 | 85% |
| Greed Corp | 191 | 75% |
| GTI Club+ | 174 | 72% |
| Gundemonium Collection | 197 | 80% |
| Gunstar Heroes | 181 | 85% |
| Hamsterball | 194 | 72% |
| Hardcore 4x4 | 15 | 81% |
| Hasbro Family Game Night | 187 | 60% |
| Heavy Weapon | 187 | 75% |
| High Velocity Bowling | 163 | 50% |
| Hi-Octane | 178 | 64% |
| Hustle Kings | 190 | 87% |
| Hyperballoid HD | 188 | 70% |
| Inferno Pool | 181 | 81% |

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| International Track & Field | 171 | 80% |
| Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos | 185 | 48% |
| Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao | 185 | 70% |
| Jet Rider 2 | 176 | 71% |
| Joe Danger | 194 | 96% |
| Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now. | | |
| Judge Dredd | 18 | 19% |
| Jumping Flash | 172 | 55% |
| Kick-Ass The Game | 194 | 60% |
| Kula World | 172 | 71% |
| Kung-Fu Live | 201 | 42% |
| Landit Bandit | 195 | 66% |
| Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light | 198 | 90% |
| Lara is back to her best in <i>The Guardian Of Light</i> . <i>Tomb Raider</i> fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too. | | |
| Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West | 193 | 65% |
| Lemmings | 151 | 79% |
| Linger In Shadows | 173 | 69% |
| LocoRoco Cocoreccho! | 159 | 80% |
| Lumines Supernova | 178 | 90% |
| Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition. | | |
| Madden NFL Arcade | 188 | 58% |
| Magic Carpet | 179 | 65% |
| Marvel Vs Capcom 2 | 182 | 90% |
| This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths. | | |
| Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond | 189 | 69% |
| MediEvil | 173 | 45% |
| Mega Man 9 | 172 | 75% |
| Mega Man 10 | 192 | 82% |
| Metal Gear Solid | 187 | 93% |
| While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential. | | |
| Metal Gear Solid Online | 175 | 45% |
| Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition | 195 | 94% |
| The HD remake of arguably the best game in the <i>Monkey Island</i> series is a more than welcome addition to the PSN. | | |
| Motorhead | 173 | 60% |
| Namco Museum Essentials | 193 | 60% |
| Noby Noby Boy | 177 | 85% |
| Nucleus | 155 | 82% |
| Numbblast | 183 | 60% |
| N20 | 37 | 70% |
| OutRun Online Arcade | 180 | 80% |
| Pac-Man Championship Edition DX | 201 | 91% |
| Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library. | | |
| Pain | 183 | 69% |
| Peggle | 189 | 94% |
| So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game. | | |
| PixelJunk Eden | 169 | 67% |
| PixelJunk Monsters | 163 | 94% |
| The second game in the <i>PixelJunk</i> series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end! | | |
| PixelJunk Shooter | 187 | 93% |
| Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its <i>PixelJunk</i> series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up. | | |
| Piyotama | 162 | 62% |
| Planet Minigolf | 196 | 58% |
| Polar Panic | 190 | 65% |
| Populous: The Beginning | 46 | 70% |
| Prince Of Persia Classic | 173 | 67% |
| Puzzle Chronicles | 194 | 70% |
| Puzzle Quest Galactrix | 181 | 68% |
| Q*bert | 58 | 53% |
| Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic | 179 | 83% |
| Rampage: World Tour | 29 | 77% |

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty | 170 | 69% |
| Rayman | 01 | 76% |
| Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons | 191 | 60% |
| Riff: Everyday Shooter | 162 | 86% |
| Rocket Knight | 194 | 74% |
| Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil | 165 | 63% |
| Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1 | 194 | 90% |
| Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3. | | |
| Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2 | 194 | 92% |
| This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue. | | |
| Savage Moon | 175 | 87% |
| Scott Pilgrim Vs The World | 197 | 77% |
| Section 8 | 193 | 78% |
| Shank | 197 | 86% |
| Shatter | 183 | 91% |
| Sheep | 171 | 78% |
| Siren Blood Curse | 170 | 62% |
| Smash Cars | 184 | 50% |
| SOCOM Confrontation | 178 | 55% |
| Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype | 195 | 70% |
| Sonic 4: Episode One | 199 | 82% |
| Sonic Adventure | 198 | 63% |
| Spin Jam | 174 | 32% |
| Syphon Filter | 48 | 93% |
| Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best. | | |
| Snakeball | 176 | 92% |
| Star Trek: D-A-C | 189 | 57% |
| Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream | 159 | 57% |
| Street Skater 2 | 178 | 40% |
| Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix | 168 | 78% |
| Super Rub-A-Dub | 151 | 83% |
| Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars | 177 | 65% |
| Super Stardust HD | 155 | 74% |
| Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix | 176 | 72% |
| Switchball | 191 | 75% |
| Swords And Soldiers | 199 | 88% |
| Syphon Filter 3 | 170 | 80% |
| Tales Of Monkey Island | 196 | 91% |
| Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the <i>Monkey Island</i> franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up. | | |
| Tank Battles | 186 | 68% |
| Tekken HD | 150 | 80% |
| Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online | 161 | 87% |
| The Last Guy | 171 | 91% |
| <i>Snake</i> meets <i>Pac-Man</i> meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up. | | |
| The Punisher: No Mercy | 182 | 49% |
| The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition | 195 | 92% |
| LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN. | | |
| Theme Hospital | 32 | 80% |
| Theme Park | 174 | 80% |
| TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled | 186 | 57% |
| Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six | 54 | 34% |
| Top Gun | 198 | 53% |
| Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds | 183 | 61% |
| ToyHome | 162 | 31% |
| Trash Panic | 181 | 79% |
| Trials Of Topaq | 159 | 50% |
| Trine | 184 | 85% |
| Tumble | 198 | 70% |
| Uno | 189 | 85% |
| Vagrant Story | 189 | 82% |
| Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment | 192 | 87% |
| Wakeboarding HD | 192 | 65% |
| Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star | 171 | 80% |
| Watchmen: The End Is Nigh | 183 | 55% |
| WipEout | 01 | 89% |
| WipEout HD | 172 | 84% |
| Wolfenstein | 181 | 70% |

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| Worms | 179 | 91% |
| There's a reason <i>Worms</i> is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay. | | |
| Worms 2: Armageddon | 198 | 87% |
| Worms Battle Islands | 201 | 80% |
| Zuma | 182 | 78% |

PSP mini LISTING

| | | |
|---|------------|------------|
| Alien Havoc | 186 | 68% |
| Bloons | 186 | 65% |
| Brainpipe | 186 | 70% |
| BreakQuest | 186 | 45% |
| Field Runners | 186 | 85% |
| Fortix | 186 | 57% |
| Funky Punch | 186 | 49% |
| Hero Of Sparta | 186 | 57% |
| Kahoots | 186 | 88% |
| Pinball Fantasies | 186 | 90% |
| <i>Pinball Fantasies</i> was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming. | | |
| Puzzle Scape | 186 | 75% |
| Tetris | 186 | 93% |
| How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here. | | |
| Vempire | 186 | 67% |

PSP LISTING

| | | |
|--|------------|------------|
| 300: March To Glory | 152 | 59% |
| Ace Combat X | 147 | 72% |
| Ace Combat: Joint Assault | 194 | 79% |
| After Burner: Black Falcon | 152 | 82% |
| Ape Academy | 134 | 44% |
| Ape Academy 2 | 145 | 52% |
| Ape Escape P | 140 | 37% |
| Army Of Two: The 40th Day | 190 | 45% |
| Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines | 187 | 77% |
| Astonishia Story | 142 | 68% |
| Beaterator | 186 | 72% |
| Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light | 145 | 45% |
| BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable | 194 | 84% |
| Blood Bowl | 184 | 53% |
| Bomberman | 150 | 83% |
| Boulder Dash: Rocks! | 165 | 69% |
| Breath Of Fire III | 138 | 82% |
| Brothers In Arms: D-Day | 149 | 69% |
| Burnout Dominator | 153 | 65% |
| Burnout Legends | 134 | 94% |
| Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, <i>Legends</i> is the best racing game on the PSP. | | |
| Buzz! Brain Bender | 175 | 68% |
| Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded | 147 | 80% |
| Capcom Classics Collection Remixed | 141 | 72% |
| Cars | 143 | 60% |
| Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles | 163 | 78% |
| Championship Manager | 137 | 65% |
| Championship Manager 2006 | 140 | 32% |
| Cid The Dummy | 180 | 32% |
| Coded Arms | 134 | 53% |
| Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory | 153 | 69% |
| Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus | 134 | 84% |
| Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII | 167 | 87% |
| Crush | 154 | 80% |
| Dante's Inferno | 191 | 76% |
| Dead Or Alive: Paradise | 192 | 56% |
| Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness | 161 | 92% |
| An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game. | | |
| Dissidia: Final Fantasy | 184 | 60% |
| Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days | 190 | 87% |
| Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2 | 154 | 50% |
| Driver 76 | 154 | 68% |

*denotes import review

GAMING CLICHES & VIDEOGAME LOGIC



Walls are insurmountable obstacles

IF YOU'VE EVER left the comfort of your own home at any point in your life, you will have encountered small walls. At some point you might even have had to circumvent the wall in some manner, usually by going around it. But *sometimes*



things will have been so desperate you will have had to go over said wall.

Now let's try to apply this real-world logic to a videogame. You leave your videogame house, walk down the videogame street and approach a knee-high videogame wall. You can't go any further. This is the obstacle to end all obstacles, and the



half-textured smudge lying on the other side of the wall will forever be out of your reach.

Being shot 900 times does not phase you, as you can rest by the wall and recover. You can carry more equipment than 15 donkeys put together. Your intelligence and stamina knows no bounds. You're a super-person. But a shin-high wall in front of you will stop your progress dead, forever.



We understand the need for boundaries in many games, to keep things focused. But surely there are better ways to stop people from breaking free from their constraints? Ways that don't involve toe-high walls stopping all progress forever (especially when 'acceptable' walls allow you to jump over them)? We know jumping exists; there needs to be a better solution.

JOBS IAN DRANSFIELD WOULD BE GREAT AT #1 MARKETING



IAN DRANSFIELD IS a man of a few talents. He can eat lots of food, for example. As such we have decided to discuss in the coming months what jobs Ian would be great at, starting with that old chestnut – marketing.

Imagine a world where you're being sold a product,



but instead of buzzword-heavy jargon or aggressive selling, it's just a fat bloke being sarcastic. How much stuff would you buy? All of the stuff.

Faked enthusiasm is off-putting to people, while genuine enthusiasm is scary. As such, Dransfield would be a perfect



marketer with his own brand of 'not being enthusiastic about things' schtick he has worked on over many years. Yeah!

But what about the very concepts of marketing? Being an armchair revolutionary and all-round bleeding heart liberal, Ian would bring something new



to the role: a conscience. Also the ability to cry when someone got mad at him, the giant pansy.

Ian would be ideal for a role in marketing. Sure, sales would fall dramatically, but can you really put a price on the comedy that would come with making a man incredibly uncomfortable? No. You cannot.

| game | issue | score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics | 159 | 55% |
| Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony | 148 | 85% |
| Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce | 179 | 69% |
| EA Replay | 147 | 74% |
| echochrome | 169 | 85% |
| echoshift | 191 | 73% |
| Everybody's Golf 2 | 167 | 86% |
| Everybody's Tennis | 195 | 88% |
| Every Extend Extra | 145 | 84% |
| Exit | 138 | 65% |
| EyePet | 199 | 77% |
| F1 2009 | 187 | 66% |
| F1 Grand Prix | 134 | 81% |
| Field Commander | 145 | 83% |
| FIFA 06 | 136 | 43% |
| FIFA 07 | 147 | 81% |
| FIFA 11 | 198 | 69% |
| FIFA World Cup 2010 | 193 | 65% |
| Fired Up | 134 | 60% |
| Final Fantasy | 164 | 63% |
| Final Fantasy Tactics | 159 | 86% |
| FlatOut: Head On | 164 | 79% |
| Football Manager 2007 | 147 | 62% |
| Football Manager Handheld | 139 | 82% |
| Football Manager Handheld 2008 | 161 | 49% |
| Football Manager Handheld 2010 | 187 | 60% |
| Formula One 06 | 143 | 78% |
| Frantix | 136 | 36% |
| Gangs Of London | 144 | 65% |
| Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 | 157 | 42% |
| Ghost Recon Predator | 200 | 60% |
| Ghostbusters: The Video Game | 188 | 55% |
| Gitaroo Man Lives! | 144 | 79% |
| Go! Sudoku | 137 | 45% |
| God Of War: Chains Of Olympus | 165 | 84% |
| God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta | 199 | 79% |
| Gradius Collection | 144 | 80% |
| Gran Turismo | 184 | 85% |
| Gripshift | 136 | 81% |
| Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars | 185 | 95% |
| Bar some combat control issues, <i>GTA: Chinatown Wars</i> has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game. | | |
| GTA: Liberty City Stories | 135 | 95% |
| Successfully taking the <i>GTA</i> formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games. | | |
| GTA: Vice City Stories | 147 | 96% |
| Improving on its predecessor, the only way <i>Vice City Stories</i> could be topped is if <i>San Andreas</i> comes to the PSP. | | |
| Half-Minute Hero | 191 | 87% |
| Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire | 136 | 69% |
| Hellboy: Science Of Evil | 170 | 60% |
| Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This? | 186 | 73% |
| Hot Pixel | 155 | 73% |
| Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings | 181 | 60% |
| Infected | 141 | 68% |
| Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon | 154 | 70% |
| International Athletics | 170 | 40% |
| Invizimals | 187 | 71% |
| Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier | 187 | 59% |
| Juiced: Eliminator | 141 | 70% |
| Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights | 160 | 80% |
| Kao Challengers | 137 | 60% |
| Killzone: Liberation | 146 | 83% |
| Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep | 196 | 88% |
| Lemmings | 138 | 63% |
| LittleBigPlanet | 186 | 90% |
| Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup. | | |
| LocoRoco | 143 | 94% |
| We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without. | | |
| LocoRoco 2 | 173 | 82% |
| LocoRoco Midnight Carnival | 186 | 81% |
| Lumines II | 137 | 74% |
| Madden NFL 06 | 137 | 74% |
| Marvel Trading Cards | 155 | 38% |

| game | issue | score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Me And My Katamari | 138 | 86% |
| Medal Of Honor Heroes | 147 | 72% |
| Medieval Resurrection | 134 | 53% |
| Mercury Meltdown | 145 | 66% |
| Metal Slug Anthology | 150 | 91% |
| We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our <i>Metal Slug</i> and the <i>Anthology</i> is a great compilation. | | |
| Metal Gear Acid 2 | 138 | 92% |
| More card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics. | | |
| Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker | 193 | 92% |
| A fantastic entry in the <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful. | | |
| Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops | 150 | 91% |
| A proper <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title. | | |
| Miami Vice | 144 | 82% |
| Micro Machines V4 | 142 | 71% |
| Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition | 134 | 57% |
| ModNation Racers | 193 | 70% |
| Monster Hunter Freedom | 140 | 81% |
| Monster Hunter Freedom 2 | 157 | 59% |
| Monster Hunter Freedom Unite | 181 | 77% |
| MotoGP | 146 | 75% |
| Motorstorm: Arctic Edge | 184 | 72% |
| Mytran Wars | 179 | 85% |
| Namco Museum Battle Collection | 136 | 68% |
| Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising | 185 | 46% |
| Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2 | 169 | 46% |
| NBA Ballers: Rebound | 139 | 61% |
| Need For Speed Undercover | 175 | 57% |
| Need For Speed Most Wanted | 136 | 73% |
| No Heroes Allowed | 199 | 69% |
| OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast | 139 | 93% |
| The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon. | | |
| PaRappa The Rapper | 155 | 88% |
| Patapon | 163 | 86% |
| Patapon 2 | 177 | 87% |
| Patchwork Heroes | 192 | 85% |
| Pirates Of The Caribbean | 143 | 52% |
| PixelJunk Monster Deluxe | 185 | 86% |
| Pro Evolution Soccer 2008 | 163 | 77% |
| Pocket Racers | 144 | 49% |
| PoPoLoCrois | 142 | 71% |
| Power Stone Collection | 145 | 88% |
| PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient | 141 | 52% |
| Prince Of Persia Revelations | 138 | 69% |
| Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands | 194 | 52% |
| Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero? | 181 | 80% |
| PSN Collection: Power Pack | 173 | 70% |
| PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack | 173 | 54% |
| Pursuit Force | 134 | 83% |
| Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice | 159 | 76% |
| Puzzle Chronicles | 190 | 61% |
| Puzzle Quest | 153 | 66% |
| R-Type Tactics | 170 | 74% |
| Rainbow Six Vegas | 156 | 78% |
| Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters | 154 | 78% |
| Rengoku 2 | 144 | 72% |
| Resistance: Retribution | 177 | 76% |
| Ridge Racer 2 | 145 | 78% |
| Ridge Racer | 132 | 91% |
| Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system. | | |
| Rock Band Unplugged | 181 | 92% |
| <i>Unplugged</i> comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld. | | |
| Rocky Balboa | 150 | 68% |
| Secret Agent Clank | 169 | 79% |
| Sega Mega Drive Collection | 177 | 79% |

| game | issue | score |
|---|------------|------------|
| Sega Rally | 158 | 90% |
| Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart, which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy. | | |
| Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja | 150 | 60% |
| Silent Hill Origins | 160 | 87% |
| Silent Hill: Shattered Memories | 190 | 52% |
| Smash Court Tennis | 154 | 58% |
| SOCOM Fire Team 2 | 154 | 70% |
| SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3 | 190 | 71% |
| SOCOM: Tactical Strike | 160 | 85% |
| SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo | 140 | 69% |
| Sonic Rivals | 147 | 70% |
| Sonic Rivals 2 | 162 | 35% |
| Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny | 183 | 92% |
| New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever. | | |
| Spider-Man 3 | 162 | 32% |
| Spinout | 149 | 81% |
| Splinter Cell: Essentials | 139 | 71% |
| Split/Second: Velocity | 200 | 71% |
| SSX On Tour | 138 | 76% |
| Star Ocean: Second Evolution | 178 | 78% |
| Star Trek: Tactical Assault | 148 | 59% |
| Star Wars Battlefront II | 137 | 74% |
| Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron | 187 | 65% |
| Star Wars: Lethal Alliance | 148 | 69% |
| Star Wars: Renegade Squadron | 160 | 78% |
| Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max | 138 | 70% |
| Street Riders | 140 | 29% |
| Super Monkey Ball Adventure | 142 | 54% |
| Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror | 140 | 90% |
| In the absence of a real MGS game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job. | | |
| Tekken 6 | 187 | 90% |
| Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play. <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP. | | |
| Tekken: Dark Resurrection | 143 | 92% |
| <i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler. | | |
| Tenchu: Shadow Assassins | 179 | 71% |
| Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins | 146 | 51% |
| The Con | 153 | 59% |
| The Cube | 153 | 64% |
| The Eye Of Judgment: Legends | 191 | 57% |
| The Godfather Mob Wars | 136 | 66% |
| The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics | 136 | 66% |
| The Sims 2 | 137 | 71% |
| TNA Impact! Cross The Line | 189 | 58% |
| TOCA 3 | 152 | 70% |
| Tokobot | 140 | 79% |
| Tomb Raider: Anniversary | 156 | 81% |
| Tomb Raider: Legend | 140 | 72% |
| Twisted Metal Head-On | 134 | 54% |
| UFC Undisputed 2010 | 197 | 80% |
| Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins | 145 | 88% |
| Undead Knights | 189 | 46% |
| Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code | 140 | 59% |
| Valhalla Knights | 158 | 49% |
| Valkyria Chronicles 2 | 196 | 87% |
| Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth | 153 | 78% |
| Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble | 140 | 82% |
| Virtua Tennis 3 | 152 | 88% |
| Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command | 161 | 70% |
| What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord! 2 | 192 | 78% |
| WipEout Pulse | 159 | 86% |
| WipEout Pure | 138 | 91% |
| Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be. <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase. | | |
| World Of Pool | 156 | 43% |
| World Tour Poker | 141 | 67% |
| World Tour Soccer 2 | 142 | 40% |
| Worms: Open Warfare 2 | 157 | 80% |
| WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006 | 137 | 84% |
| WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007 | 147 | 80% |
| World Rally Championship | 134 | 67% |

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DOES THE PLAY TEAM DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

IN THE SPIRIT of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, we decided it was about time we took the next step in the evolution of mankind. As such, **Play** will now be operated entirely by a single individual – a super-agent of sorts – made from the finest constituent parts of the **Play** team. Just don't ask what happened to the off-cuts.

ORIGINALLY FROM: Jon
SPECIAL POWER:
Somewhat wonky teeth

ORIGINALLY FROM: Chris
SPECIAL POWER:
Nipples 'slightly too large'

ORIGINALLY FROM: Ryan
SPECIAL POWER: Really
rather hairy forearms

ORIGINALLY FROM: Ian
SPECIAL POWER: Super
crooked ankle and knees

INTRODUCING: PLAY-O-TRON 9000





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Nintendo

IGN 90%

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